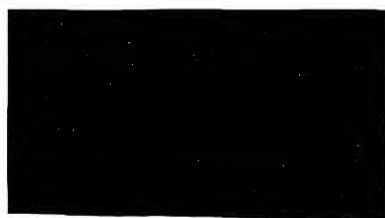


THE THEORY
OF
BOOK SELECTION
FOR
PUBLIC LIBRARIES

LIONEL ROY McCOLVIN, F.L.A.



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INTRODUCTION

BOOK SELECTION is the first task of librarianship. It precedes all other processes—cataloguing, classification, or administration—and it is the most important. No matter how thorough and efficient the rest of the work may be, the ultimate value of a library depends upon the way in which the stock has been selected. There is, of course, some truth in the saying that “a poor collection well administered is better than a good collection badly administered,” but though bad administration can certainly reduce to an enormous extent the value of the best library, the best administration cannot do more than is made possible by the quality of the stock.

It is, therefore, of paramount importance that we should study, discuss and experiment in this subject to the very best of our abilities and opportunity, in order not only to render our utmost services to the community, but also that the best results may reward our work in other branches of librarianship, which work can be of little avail unless we build upon the solid foundation of good book selection.

Nevertheless it is very doubtful whether it has received adequate attention; though a great deal of valuable work has been done, it has all approached the question from one angle—the practical aspect alone has been considered, and so the philosophy and theory remain almost untouched. With the exception of casual and brief comments all the help given to the

selector is concerned with actual books ; all our aids to book selection consist of lists, annotated or otherwise, of desirable works or of lists of such lists—in other words it is purely bibliographical. Undoubtedly such work is of inestimable value ; we cannot have too much of it providing it is well done—but it is itself only the application of principles and opinions which have never been thoroughly studied, and, secondly, its value is limited by its extent. In many cases no guide is given—no bibliographical assistance can cover all the special needs which we must satisfy or help in even the majority of the cases upon which we must decide. Wherever the bibliographer fails us we must make our own decisions, and here nothing can avail but a knowledge of fundamentals—of the principles and theoretical considerations which *presumably* have guided the authors of bibliographical aids to book selection ! Furthermore, it is only this study of the philosophy and theory of the subject which can enable us to judge and evaluate the work of others and to apply it to the best advantage. To this study we must sooner or later turn our attention.

The discussion is, nevertheless, beset with difficulties—a sufficient explanation but a very insufficient justification for the way in which it has been neglected and avoided—and these pages cannot pretend to do more than suggest the methods to be adopted, the ideals to be sought after, and the principles which must form the basis of further investigation. Even that much should be useful, however, since an erroneous statement that provokes argument is always preferable to the absence of any statement and any argument. To return, however, to the difficulties, we must place first the need to get to the fundamentals of our work

and its relation to the public. We are so constantly engaged in meeting individual needs and considering separate existing books that we have little time to seek below the surface of these enquiries and requirements, to reduce them to their common denominators, or to judge each decision as an integral part of the bigger structure we are building up—the representative, well balanced and serviceable library. Secondly, there is the difficulty of dissociating ourselves from our actual library work and associating ourselves, instead, with the reader, understanding his needs and desires—in some ways, maybe, better than he understands them himself—and envisaging library service as a force in the development of the community. And the third difficulty, arising out of this, is our diffidence in expressing opinions on and conducting researches into subjects which appear to be without our professional province, even though this proves to be merely the *appearance* of truth and not its reality—even though such research is essential to our successful functioning. To make this clear the writer may say that in certain of the following pages he expresses opinions, essential to his argument, which belong to the field of sociology and social psychology rather than to librarianship. At first there is the suspicion that such matters are better left to the specialist in these subjects, but there then comes the realisation that only by appreciation of the inter-relations of his professional work is it possible to carry his discussion further than the externals that have failed before—and so inevitably, he is carried over into debatable ground, or at least into ground which is held to be outside his proper region.

Perhaps after all this is not merely permissible but

desirable. Librarianship, more than any other work, brings its votaries into contact with the many phases of human activity. Librarians—once they cease to regard themselves as mere custodians of books—unavoidably develope (or degenerate) into jacks of all trades and masters of none—excepting, maybe, their own. And the truth is that sooner or later the librarian, if he is at all inclined to enquiry, *must* become a sociologist of sorts. He cannot possibly remain in contact with the varied multitude of men who form his clientele without beginning to “classify” and catalogue them, their work and their aspirations. As classification is the framework of science and cataloguing but the codification of knowledge, and as men and their work form the subject matter of sociology, can there be any wonder if the librarian seeks in time to base his work as a professional librarian upon his studies as an amateur sociologist?

one word, be comprehensive. We do not consider any special demand, or group of demands, but all demands, the individual need being judged not only on its own merits but in relation to the whole body of needs. This realisation must precede all discussions.

What do we mean by a comprehensive collection? It is frequently asserted—and undoubtedly the assertion is well founded—that the large library should aim at being comprehensive, that is to say, at representing adequately and proportionately every subject of knowledge and speculation, and, further, that in smaller libraries this ideal shall be limited only by the size of the library and its income.

But a library could be comprehensive in either of two senses of the word. It could be comprehensive of *subjects* or of *demands*. These things are by no means the same, and, as will soon be clear, the second type of comprehensiveness is that at which we aim. The first implies the representation of subjects *as such*, whereas the second regards subjects as matters upon which information is required. This is really an important distinction and not a mere quibble.

In the first place there are many subjects in which few people, if any, are the least interested or on which they are neither desirous nor in need of information. Secondly, there are many subjects where the interest, demand and need is quite out of proportion to the size and intrinsic importance of the subjects when they are viewed as a part of knowledge.

To give an example, the rotundity of the earth is a phenomenon of great significance to man, yet as a subject of study its interest is comparatively limited, while, on the other hand, the best way to breed canaries, a theme of infinitesimal significance, might well pro-

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voke a big literature and considerable interest. Yet if we builded our library with the intention of being comprehensive and proportionate by *subject* we should need ten thousand books on the former subject and a page on the latter. Locality and period are other factors indicating the superiority of demand representation. For instance, A town and B town maintain roughly the same population and, as subjects may be regarded as of about the same importance, but to its inhabitants A town is a subject of demand much greater than that for B town. There is perhaps no need to elaborate this theme ; it may, in fact, be laid down as the first principle that *representation must be comprehensive of and in proportion to demand and not subject.*

This leads naturally to a vital reservation, to be considered in detail in a succeeding chapter ; though we must consider demand we must deal not only with its *volume* but also with its *value*. If we heeded only the loudness of the cry we should build up weird and wonderful collections deserving of all the horrible things we have heard uttered by those who decry libraries as pandering to popular depravity.

It is the evaluation of demand that presents so many difficulties. Books are so many and varied in their services to mankind, whose calls upon the library are so heterogeneous, often incoherent, influenced by a multitude of considerations, ever changing in their nature and insistence. An attempt will be made, however, to find some order in this chaos.

Then, to summarise the scope of the enquiry, the assessment of the volume of demand will follow. This subject will present its own difficulties and limitations, but these two aspects of value and volume of

demand, taken together, must form the general guide to the book selector. They are quite distinct and can only be assessed separately, but when it is desired to apply them, to base representation upon them, they must be considered jointly. Volume alone is no index; neither is value alone. The valuable demand may be negligible so far as its volume is concerned, and the result in such a case is that provision would render only a negligible service—the books supplied would not be used. Similarly the largest volume of demand may be (and often is) of the slightest possible value. So, as we do not intend to fill our libraries either with unused books of great value or with popular but valueless literature we must, in each case, relate the two quantities. The method—this is a very brief summary of what is discussed later in detail—is to give to each of the subjects dealt with, so far as possible, an index number representing its relative *value*. The volume of demand is represented by a similar number (not an actual number but merely a proportionate one, of course), and the two are multiplied, the resulting figures being the representation number. Thus if A is a subject valued at 10 and B at 1, if the volume of demand for both is the same, say 6, the representation numbers are 60 and 6 respectively. If the volume of demand for A is 6 and for B 72, the representation numbers are 60 and 72, and so on.

This, of course, is the most rudimentary application of the principle.

Many other factors, to be dealt with in due course, will subject this rule to considerable modifications, may, in fact, render its application impossible or undesirable.

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At this stage it must be made clear what is meant by representation. In the first place the figures given a few lines back, it must be insisted, are relative numbers indicating *proportions* only. When it was said that the representation numbers of A and B were 60 and 72 it was not meant that 60 and 72 books on each should be provided nor even 5 and 6, since the actual number of books or volumes on a subject is clearly no indication of our representation of that subject. One book on one subject might be more serviceable than ten on another; that is to say, the one would satisfy as much *demand* as the ten. Therefore just as service is the function of the library as a whole, so it must be the determining factor in the representation of each individual subject. If it is decided that the representation numbers of E and F are the same we must provide as many books as are necessary to satisfy that amount of demand which is equivalent to the representation numbers. It may be two or it may be twenty. If for no other reason this is due to the obviously differing values of books. It is perhaps an impertinence to give an instance, but it is clear that the demand satisfying values, in their respective fields, of the five volumes of Glazebrook's "Dictionary of Applied Physics" and five volumes of So-and-So's Sermons are very different.

In short, when we ascertain the representation number of a subject we decide the extent to which the library is to serve those people who are interested in that subject.¹

¹ That is to say, the extent possible at the time, this being in proportion to other representations, and, naturally, limited in extent by such factors as income, space, etc. It is, needless to say, a very different thing from the total possible service the library *could* render but for the limitations of actuality.

Now,—and this is a side line which it is scarcely desirable to discuss in a general chapter, though there will be no need to mention it again—it must be clear that there are cases where we cannot render a given amount of service better than by a certain percentage of what may be called “*intentional duplication.*” Pitman’s shorthand provides a clear example of this. In the ordinary way the literature to meet this demand would consist of general text books, texts in shorthand, dictionaries, etc. Much of the demand would be for the first, yet there can be no variety in the presentation of the elements of such a subject—no text books could be better than the official ones. Therefore, if there are to be twenty books on the subject, there will be room and need for perhaps three or more *copies* of the general text book. Such intentional duplication is widely practised ; it could with advantage be more often adopted. Whenever the relation between the demand for information and the supply of literature is such that the former can be answered best by a limited number of books, single copies of which would be insufficient, this “intentional duplication” is called for.

Related to the question of the intentional duplication of information is that of the duplication arising unavoidably when any *extension* of facilities is made. Owing to the nature of books themselves it will usually be found that in order to supply a certain amount of information we must duplicate a large percentage of it. For instance, if we possess a general work on a subject and wish to double the amount of information offered, any *larger* work would probably contain all the information in the first work and so the percentage of new ground might not be so great as

appearances led us to suppose. Similarly, the addition of works on branches or topics of the main subject would all involve repetition, and again, we all know that in order to add the one per cent. or five per cent. or so of recent discoveries, etc., we frequently have to buy a "new edition." This unintentional duplication of information must not be confused with the augmentation of information.

On the other hand there are instances where the demand is insufficient (in value and volume together) to justify the provision of even one volume. Since the book (or the pamphlet) is the smallest unit of supply there is, in such cases, an excuse for ignoring the subject altogether. This state of affairs is of everyday occurrence, yet we often lack the courage to be scientific in our refusal.

Then we must consider the *varying nature of demand*. There are few subjects which do not appeal in quite different ways to the various people interested, and the books which answer one form of appeal may not answer the other. The obvious example of this is the call for "popular" works. Most branches of knowledge produce two widely different classes of readers—those who require knowledge and those who satisfy interest. Of course both of these classes *gain* knowledge, but the distinction is a clear one in practice. Perhaps it will be better to say that in the one case knowledge is desired for a definite purpose and in the other case for its own sake and to widen the range of the reader's general comprehensive (and therefore naturally less detailed) appreciation of life and its phenomena. Nevertheless this distinction is, as before said, a practical one of importance. For example, electricity is studied with a definite object

and as a science and, to some degree, to its details and most specialised extent, by the practising electrical engineer, or the student who desires to become one, and the physicist. At the same time it is of *interest* to thousands, schoolboys and old men, who have no intention of applying their knowledge and who have not, moreover, the time or inclination for any but the most superficial studies. Therefore, whenever the demand for a subject is twofold in nature the representation must be twofold.

From general matters we pass to special conditions governing particular classes and types of book. In addition to the principles of demand, etc., applicable to all fields of representation there are many secondary but all important considerations peculiar to each section of the library. There are other "sectional" problems--how shall we deal with controversial subjects, for example. Following sections will be devoted to a discussion of the relation of the demand for literature to the supply and then the individual book will call for our attention--what shall we demand in all books, what qualities will give one preference over another, how shall we judge the authorship, the physical make-up of the book, and such related matters.

II

THE EVALUATION OF DEMAND

AN over-recurring topic of discussion among librarians and those interested in our work is the desirability or otherwise of providing fiction, and, if so, to what extent. The opinions expressed in this connection are as many and varied as the speakers engaged and, since they remain opinions based either upon unformulated reasons or even upon mere prejudice, the discussion is likely to continue *ad infinitum* unless we can arrive at a definite decision based upon a thorough consideration of the elements involved. The fiction question is merely one aspect of the evaluation of demand and can only be settled satisfactorily when we appreciate its place in the wider question. The same applies to the question of providing music or art books and, in fact, to any problem concerned with the representation and proportion of any subject in a public library. We cannot consider each case on its own merits, we cannot say, "Novels pander to the lowest taste, are mostly trashy and keep people from better literature, therefore we must avoid them," nor yet can we say, "Novels are of great recreational value and recreation is a very valuable element in life, therefore let us fill our shelves with them, preferably with the most popular, no matter how poor they be." We can only say, "What is the actual value of the novel? How

does this compare with the value of other subjects the representation of which must be effected by the representation of fiction ? ”

But in order to *compare* the value of two subjects (or classes) of literature we must have a *common basis* of evaluation, some standard of good by which we can judge both. What common basis can be applied to every subject—to those as diverse in kind as sculpture and Scandinavian folklore, poetry and pumps !—only their use to humanity. It may seem impossible to evaluate every subject on this basis ; it may appear impudent and imprudent to attempt to do so. Nevertheless some tentative idea of these relative values must form the basis of book selection. If we agree that demand must be the deciding factor in selection and that, therefore, we must evaluate that demand, we must be in a position to do so. Such a position can only result from a definite endeavour to orient our perspective. If the difficulties of such a proceeding proved insurmountable we should have no alternative but to relinquish any attempt to evaluate demand, and depend instead upon representation by subject value or by the *volume* of demand—both very undesirable practices.

Demand for books—for the information they contain, or for the intellectual, spiritual, recreative or æsthetic stimulus they provide arises from need or desire. In proportion to need and desire will be, roughly speaking, the demand for its satisfaction. The only justification for the provision of any book is the existence of need or desire for it, and accordingly the value or importance of that need is equivalent to the value of the book, and *vice versa*. Roughly

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speaking then the evaluation of demand resolves itself into the evaluation of needs and desires.

It is here that we find our difficulties, here that we encounter an insurmountable obstacle which must absolutely preclude any really systematic consideration. It is frankly impossible to schedule and compare these needs and desires of which we speak. If it were possible to prepare a table of them arranged in order of importance our task would be delightfully simple, but such a table is and must be a philosopher's dream. In the first place we could divide human activities into the material, the intellectual and æsthetic, and the spiritual. But which of these is most important? It is quite a matter of opinion. The pure utilitarian might say the first, arguing that the maintenance, propagation and development of material life are of primary significance; the humanist might urge the supreme value of intellect and culture, but he would have to admit that since this must build upon the material basis of the maintenance of life he could not assert that one was more important than the other, since one could not exist without the other; and even he who believed that spiritual values alone should be regarded would be in the same dilemma.

Secondly, the expansion of these main divisions if we could even agree as to their position would be beset with similar difficulties. And, thirdly, even could we devise a schedule which would arrange progressively according to their pure values the needs and desires of humanity as a whole, it would most certainly not apply to those of any single individual.

So clearly such an attempt would be useless, even were it possible. We must, therefore, look for a

different viewpoint, from which, nevertheless, the whole ground may be surveyed. If we cannot consider the pure, exact and comparative importance of demand we must turn to its purpose, and accept that as the criterion for evaluation. Our path is now much more straightforward since, though in many ways the common purpose of all human endeavour is ignored or stifled, there is undoubtedly a general and basic idea behind it all, forming its only real impulse and excuse. This purpose may be described in a few words as the desire of every individual to develop his personality to the fullest extent, to gain from life the maximum of experience, active and passive, and to find in life the greatest possible amount of enjoyment and happiness. This definition of human purpose will be found to be wide enough to include all the three branches of activity mentioned before, and a little thought will show that it is not necessarily antagonistic to any current moral or religious code.

It is, however, also so wide that though we may have altered our point of view, we have not really evaded our old difficulty of comparative values. If we agree that the purpose of all human activity should be the promotion of individual development, etc., and if we decide to evaluate desires according to the degree to which they fulfil this purpose we will still need a standard of comparison and scale of values—or so it would seem. But the difference in viewpoint though it leaves us, as before, face to face with the impossible, suggests subsidiary issues and certain implications which will probably lead us as far as we can hope to get.

We are still unable to judge the importance of the various categories and ~~no matter~~ ^{we are at least} exploit

compelled to recognise the importance—actual and not relative—of them all. If we agree—and here the proposition is merely restated in other words—that all human activities are legitimate which foster human development and happiness, we are compelled to admit that all such activities have just claims to representation in public libraries. This may now seem an unnecessary remark— but a glance back over the history of libraries to the times when, say, music was regarded as an undesirable provision, will show that it is *not* unnecessary. It must show that the library is not either an aid to material knowledge, or essentially or primarily a vocationally-educational institution or yet a purely literary force. Since library work has been and is harnessed with all these and other equally sectional functions it is by no means unnecessary to counter such arguments by the statement of a basic principle. It is then, let it be repeated, our legitimate function to foster any branch of endeavour which aims at human development. That is the first implication of our fresh viewpoint.

The first principle of evaluation, thus disclosed, is therefore the negative one that we must not choose between the various categories or types of demand by fostering one to the serious neglect or omission of any other. In other words we must “comprehend” (include) all types of demand.

Secondly, we are provided by this viewpoint with a valuable general basis for criticism. Though the viewpoint does not enable us to compare types it *does* enable us to compare varieties of each type—or at any rate sub-varieties. Thus, though we still have no ground upon which to assert that music is more valuable a force than literature, we can distinguish

a system of water pipes according to some theoretical pattern or in exact replica of that in some other town; the same man would so arrange the pipes that they carried water to places where there were people needing it and, also, to places where he anticipated that people would soon live. So it must be with the library. Its only excuse, and its only work, is *service*. And service cannot exist without demand. Any library provision for which there is no demand can never be serviceable. Books in themselves are nothing. They have no more meaning than the white paper upon which they were printed until they are made serviceable by demand. The library, therefore, which consists of non-serviceable books might as well be composed of blank exercise books—in fact the latter would be more useful. It stands to reason, moreover, that the more closely book selection is related to demand the greater the resultant and possible service.

Therefore book selection resolves itself into a consideration of two fields—demand and supply. On the one hand we have the need, urgent or unexpressed, distinct or vague, for such information and other material, intellectual or spiritual assistance as books can give; on the other the books themselves. The two main processes of book selection are, therefore, firstly the discovery and assessment (by value and by volume) of needs, and secondly their satisfaction; that is to say, the choice and provision of such books as will satisfy these needs. Now the first process *must* come first. This *should* be an axiom but, in the absence of an attempt to deal with the question of demand (the chief intention of this work) and in the presence of innumerable well-intended but not so easily desirable attempts to exploit theories as the

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people "ought to read" and demand, the point is not so generally appreciated as it needs to be. We find libraries and, more frequently, sections of libraries constructed not horse foremost but cart foremost, and apart from the fact that these libraries cannot function properly, the proceeding is quite foolish, for at least one reason. The first of these two factors, demand, is for all practical purposes¹ quite beyond our control, whereas the second, supply, is not. We cannot alter, create or abolish demand, we cannot fashion it or mould it, whereas supply is a matter to which we can devote all our knowledge and experience. In other words unless we apply ourselves to the question of making *supply* meet *demand* we can have no need for any science of book selection whatsoever, since we cannot make *demand* meet *supply*. If our supply is not, therefore, closely related to demand, it is, roughly speaking, of no importance what it consists of or how it is provided and arranged. If we do not consider supply in relation to its purpose, science cannot enter into the work at all. If we desire a science of book selection it must develop from this realisation.

Therefore, let it be repeated, we must learn first what provision is needed and desirable, and then we must ascertain how far the existing supply of literature enables us to make it. The supply factor is by no means unknown, uncharted ground, as the demand factor, unfortunately, must be regarded, and so the latter will receive first attention in these pages.

A preliminary to any discussion of book selection, however, is the realisation that the public library is a universal provider, that it must embrace, as far as possible, all knowledge and activity, that it must, in

¹ See chapter IV.

It would be possible to approach the subject from many angles, but the method selected as most suitable and fruitful is based upon a fundamental conception of the functions of the library—the idea that it should be designed to meet *demands* for the various facilities it can offer. Therefore, we consider the library throughout the discussion, not as a separate or separable institution existing apart from or independent of the life of the community, but as an integral part of human activity. We regard the library as an organ in the social body, functioning only in relation to the rest of the organism, and refuse to consider any other idea of its work, convinced that only in this position can the library render its legitimate and full services.

This attitude is, of course, generally accepted nowadays, but, since it is the foundation-stone upon which all that follows is builded, it must be emphasised at the beginning. Those who disagree, those who look upon a library as a thing which can be constituted without regard to the people who will use it, those who imagine that we can collect so many books on this and so many on that and dump the result in the centre of a town for the public to use it or neglect it as they think fit, those who imagine that the right provision for one time and one district can be the right provision for another time or another district—these will find no assistance in these pages, nor anything which they can understand, appreciate, or even disagree with on reasonable and logical grounds.

Our starting point is, therefore, that the library must be constituted in response to or in anticipation of demand, just as the water supply or the tramway services are constituted. Only madmen would lay out

there should be no hesitation in making the admission since it applies equally to all professions and activities) there are many whose qualifications are inadequate. Therefore this personal sense of fitness, this sub-conscious ability to make the right selection, is of widely differing value. In many cases it is present to such an extent that it would be an impertinence to suggest that the application of our principles would bear any better fruit than the product of those well-developed, experienced minds: in others, however, it is deficient to the danger point.

The first value of the theory of book selection is, therefore, that it should act as a guide, and a helper, to those by whom, to a greater or less extent, the general principles are neither appreciated nor applied unconsciously.

Secondly, the experience of the most experienced must be deficient in some point. The problem is bound to arise sooner or later for which past knowledge and the conditions determining other provisions can offer no guide. When common sense and the special professional instincts fail or refuse to indicate a well-defined course of action, to what can we fall back unless it be a general principle. Here we may find either positive or negative assistance—positive if a principle can be found which is truly applicable and effective, negative if, failing this, we can find the justification of consistency. And, though we would not stress this negative aspect, it is no doubt better to be able to say, either to oneself or to another, that, though we may not feel *sure* of the rightness of a decision, it is at least in accordance with our general principles, than not to be able to defend or excuse our attitude, thus confessing to haphazard ways.

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general principles call for the keenest intelligence for their application. Nevertheless the value of a general plan, of a foundation body of theory is twofold and undeniable. The scientist, though his sense of possibilities might lead him to occasional discoveries, depends in the main upon his knowledge and constant regard for the accepted laws of nature, and in the same way though the principles of book selection may be very vague and unproved compared with those of the scientist, the librarian cannot afford to neglect them if he would build his library scientifically and not according to the dictates of his, at best, imperfect sense of direction when plodding through unmapped territory.

His sense of direction *might* be right—but it might not. The difficulties of librarianship are, alas, unrealised by any but the librarian—no outsider can be expected to appreciate the amount of actual knowledge, the discrimination, sympathy, understanding and sense of proportion involved in such processes as, say, classification and book selection. Considering the difficulty of his task and its wide range the average librarian succeeds to an almost unbelievable degree; on the whole, the average library, so far as the composition of its stock is concerned, is considerably better than we have reason to expect in view of the many and varied problems to be confronted, the numberless obstacles in the way of development, and the absence of any real science of book selection; but it is, nevertheless, manifestly imperfect. In the first place, excluding a certain amount of limited bibliographical assistance, the provisions of any library in a form of the quality of the individual responsible. understanding. are splendi

THE THEORY OF BOOK SELECTION FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

I

THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF DEMAND REPRESENTATION

IN book selection, as in most other processes, we are in the habit of applying, subconsciously as it were, certain general principles evolved as a result of experience and study. There are many occasions when, confronted with the necessity to decide for or against the inclusion of a book or a subject, we have no hesitation. We "know," with sufficient certainty for our own satisfaction, what our action must be, but we could relatively seldom give our reasons. We may not, in fact, *have* any reasons sufficiently distinct to be formulated, being guided instead not by principles or any scientific methodology, but by a vague sense of fitness and rightness. In other words we should say that we were following the dictates of our common sense and of our accumulation of experience.

Now, though both of these are most desirable elements to be cultivated to their utmost possibilities, they cannot lead to the best results so long as they lack the framework upon which to build. ~~Common sense and experience can never be superse-~~
~~the finest,~~

between what we may describe as the more desirable and the less desirable¹ music or literature.

If it can be asserted of a work of art or literature that it provokes the maximum of mental or spiritual development or happiness that work must be regarded as one of the most desirable; if, on the other hand, a work, though in no way *undesirable*, provokes the minimum of development it is among the least desirable. Undesirable work is that which tends definitely and actively to cramp or distort development or to create genuine unhappiness². Such work must be excluded, unless there be some other powerful reason for its inclusion.

Unless, however, a work is definitely undesirable for this reason, we must be careful before we decide upon its exclusion. The human factor must be considered. We must remember that no matter how great the desirability of a work may be it is potent only so far as it can be brought into contact with the individual mind. Prejudice and ignorance may be, in fact *are*, so powerful that the most desirable work is generally limited in its appeal. Much as we may deplore the fact that tenth-rate novels are read by thousands and the Greek tragedians by the very few

¹ "Less desirable" is used purposely instead of undesirable, since as will be shown later there is a clear distinction between them. Undesirable activities are those which are anti-social, decadent, or retrograde, whereas by the less desirable ones we mean simply those which are only of a limited value and of appeal to lower elements in humanity.

² By unhappiness is meant here an unhealthy, diseased mental condition, not the unhappiness, very different in value and effect, called forth by, say, the performance of a great tragedy, not the "sorrow that purges" of Aristotle. Such unhappiness is really a form of the most lasting and powerful happiness—sympathy and understanding.

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its alteration is another and different consideration from that with which we are at the moment concerned. The point we should realise is that since a large proportion of readers cannot or will not read the most desirable books we can only function, in so far as they are concerned, if we provide the less desirable ones. That is the only real answer to the fiction query. If we apply to this question our previous theory of the joint consideration of the value and the volume of demand a reasonably satisfactory representation will result. We will most surely provide the most desirable, but we will not cease to provide the less desirable. If we decide that Meredith has fifty times the value of Ethel M. Dell as a force tending to the development of mind, the enrichment of experience and the promotion of understanding and sympathy, and if the public demand is as one to fifty we will provide both equally. Only with such a principle can we face the fiction question.

In practice it will not be found very difficult to evaluate according to this principle works of fiction or any other form of artistic or literary work. Let us apply this basis of criticism to fiction; as an instance, that work which is most remarkable for its true understanding and knowledge of life will surely be the most powerful aid to the development of personality. That work which, though not necessarily dealing with the unfamiliar, yet broadens the scope of one's appreciation and understanding, will also be among the most desirable. Similarly there is work which, though lacking in contact with the actual, stimulates the imaginative faculties and develops the life-of-the-imagination of its readers. Such work is also desirable. On the other hand works which treat of the unreal or deal with the real in an atmosphere of unreality without

stimulating the imagination cannot to any considerable extent assist in mental or imaginative development, and are less desirable. They are not necessarily undesirable, since they will at least be of purely recreational value to some, and to others they will represent the desired or possible maximum of mental stimulation. The greatness of Shakespeare (and his "desirability") consists of his grasp of the realities of life and his consummate ability to communicate his understanding, and the tenth-rateness of the writer who is concerned with puppet peers and society adventuresses or impossible cowboys and prairie beauties is due very largely to his ignorance or omission of any appreciation of mankind's impulses or aspirations. Every line of the one can bring into life some thought or intuition in the mind or heart of his reader, some chord of response between the reader's life and the life and thought of the writer; while shelves of the latter could not achieve this, since in them is nothing human and tangible to which he could respond.

No, not "nothing." Even in the least desirable there must be somewhere some suggestion provocative of response, though it may be slight—and there are many, we may say far too many, readers incapable or undesirous of heeding any but this slight and shallow suggestion. That is why we cannot altogether ignore the tenth-rate or the fiftieth-rate. Whenever we encounter a book which to us seems lacking in all the elements of desirability, but one for which, nevertheless, there is a much popular demand, we must realise that in some way there is a response between that work and all those readers. If we have judged the work properly that response will be of little value, but the

aggregate of this slight value to very many readers may become sufficiently important to justify its provision.

By a similar process of argument we are in a position to evaluate works in other forms of literature, art, music, and in fact all those activities comprised in the category of intellectual and æsthetic interests, from metaphysics to Mah Jongg.¹ Music, for example, may be judged in exactly the same way as fiction, by the value and extent of its personal significance; games by a joint consideration of their physical effect and their influence on initiative and co-operative effect—thus, it is possible to assert that football is a more desirable sport than foot racing, since (though the advocates of the latter could naturally deny this) an impartial judge would surely decide in favour of the latter; and so on. Needless to say, the librarian will not possess sufficient knowledge to attempt such evaluation himself, but it must be remembered that he has access to and can apply the judgment of others in all fields of interest. All that the librarian needs to be—perhaps it is not so little, after all—is a judge of judgments, an evaluator of evaluations, a critic of critics. Such ability he must regard as an essential qualification.

Before leaving this category there is one implication which we cannot ignore. It is that just as the value

¹ We must, of course, include in this category all sports and pastimes and all recreations, saving any bodily exercises which are so essentially concerned with the propagation or maintenance of physical health as to belong to the category of material things. It may be impossible to draw the line between the two categories, but it will be seen that most games, though of undoubted physical value, are played for the sake of their æsthetic or intellectual value. The pursuit of all occupations, including all the arts, will be accompanied by purely physical effects, but these are a subsidiary result, a by-product rather than a purpose.

(durability) of a work will depend upon its power to develop the personality and upon the range and importance of its power to stimulate responsiveness, so will the "duration" of its value and appeal depend upon these qualities. This fact must be obvious. The appeal, and consequently the aggregate value of a work, will last only so long as it remains significant, and though man may change in externals and superficialities, his fundamental nature and interests are only very gradually altering. Therefore, the more fundamental the significance of a work the longer will its appeal last—and the greater, too, will be its present value.

Though duration of utility is, as stated in another chapter, only one of several considerations, the interrelation of present value and permanent worth is deserving of consideration in book selection. It is a strong argument in favour of the "live" classics—there can be *no* argument in favour of the "dead" classics, which are of interest only to the "scholar" editor in search of fresh fields, at whose behest alone do we, with unthinking acceptance, allow them to be foisted upon us. The test of a "live" classic is that it was a living force at the time of its birth and that it has remained so, subject of course to the normal waxing and waning of tastes and interests. Ninety-nine per cent. of the classics which require resuscitation are better left in their graves. That, however, is an unpardonable digression.

From the category of intellectual and æsthetic interests we pass to that of material matters, and perceive that, though the same principles will hold good, there will be a distinct difference in the demand. As we have seen, in the former category the volume of

demand will more often be in inverse ratio to its value. This must not be taken to imply a cynical superior attitude towards public taste, since whatever one's opinions may be the facts are there—Charles Garvice is a better seller than Turgenev, Bovril pictures are more common than reproductions of Velasquez's works. In the material category, however, this is not the case. The volume of need¹ is very largely in direct relation to its value—as, in fact, is only natural. Since every man must, for example, wear clothes, an innumerable number of people must concern themselves with the manufacture of cloth, the cultivation of cotton, and so on, and they must obtain the necessary knowledge. It is not a question of taste but of necessity. The demand for books on, say, electrical engineering will be directly related to the number of people engaged in electrical work in the locality, and since they will be rendering direct service to the community the value of this demand is undeniably in proportion to their number and services. So, on the whole, this demand will call for little evaluation. There are, however, departures from this rule.

In the first place even in material matters there is room for taste and inclination; necessity is not the only factor. To any one individual there are very few things which are really "necessary" in the sense

¹ It must be remembered that the volume of need is not necessarily the same as the volume of demand, since the provision of the largest part of man's needs is delegated to a few. Every man does some one service for many others, and so, though all *need* the services, all do not *need* (or demand) information upon them. As a rule this factor cancels itself out, but it must be mentioned because there are services—such as gardening, housework, etc.—which the average man does not delegate and here the volume of demand will be relatively greater.

that nothing can be substituted for them. Wherever there is an alternative there is room for the exercise of taste. Again, those things which are essential to anyone represent only a small portion of the whole body of material things. For all the others demand is in proportion not to need but to desire, and though we cannot and need not attempt to evaluate the one, we *may* need to judge the worth of the other—though, in practice, instances when such discretion should be exercised will be few. The important fact is that the more necessary a thing the stronger the case for its representation, demand being equal. Roughly speaking, the importance of a material activity can be estimated by its extent—the moralist or the sociologist may not agree with this, but for practical purposes it must suffice—and since the volume of demand must be taken as indicating the extent of activity we need scarcely enquire further into its value.

If, however, we consider the library as a social force with the power to direct to some extent man's demand, (or, to use the usual expression, if we consider the library as an *educational* force) we will not be content to leave demand our only consideration. This whole question will be considered in a later chapter, so it will be sufficient to note here that, though there will be subjects (in other categories as well as this one) which we will represent to a greater extent than is justified by actual demand it will be because we wish and hope to increase the demand for this subject; we will not be evaluating the demand itself but *judging* its volume, which we consider less than it should be. To expose this difference by a concrete example—supposing we agreed that Meredith was 50 times more desirable than Ethel M. Dell (to take our old instance)

and, that the demand being as 1 to 50, we supplied 10 books by each. Suppose further that we wished to stimulate the demand for Meredith by doubling this stock we should not be implying that Meredith was 100 times more desirable—we had already decided on 50—but would be basing our provision upon *desired* and not on *actual* demand. The two considerations must be kept clear, whereas in many libraries they are hopelessly muddled, with the result (due as much to this confusion as to ignorance of the principles which should guide representatives) that the shelves are filled with desirable but unread books provided at the expense of less desirable but useful ones. Whenever a librarian engages in educational work he must appreciate its exact extent as apart from general demand representation.

Of the three main categories mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that of "spiritual" matters remains. As a matter of fact it does not call for detailed discussion, since, though we are in the habit of dividing interests into these three classes, for our purposes spiritual and intellectual matters may well be grouped together. For, if we are to avoid a religious discussion, how else can we regard them. It is only a question of standpoint. The atheist who spoke of developing his personality and the Christian who sought to attain to the Kingdom of God would both mean, not the same thing, but the same *kind* of endeavour. For a brief discussion of religion, the chief example of "spiritual" interests, the reader is referred to a later chapter.

The foregoing inevitably falls short of providing an adequate guide to the evaluation of demand. So far as material matters are concerned it has led us to a

virtual admission that evaluation is unnecessary as a rule ; so far as intellectual matters have been considered it leaves us with a means of judging the relative value of the differing classes of demand in main subjects. We still cannot place music either before or after literature, poetry either before or after drama as subjects.

Is it possible to take the enquiry a stage further ?

How must we deal with these main classes ? Rather let us ask whether it is necessary to attempt to evaluate them ? People, let us say, are interested in history, topography, sociology, philosophy, literature, art, ethics, and so on. Is it possible, or desirable, to attempt to place these in some sequence of relative importance ? Only in one way, and that will involve stepping into controversy.

In spite of what was said early in the chapter, let us assert¹ that material matters are really of more importance, though not of more *significance*, than intellectual matters. This is an unavoidable contention. Let us assert that, since man cannot live without bread (in the metaphorical sense), until he has secured the supply thereof he is foolish to think of developing his mind since to do so would be suicidal. Existence must be secured before "life" can be developed. Remember that we have already stated that we do not regard material matters as of most significance ; on the contrary they are but the means to an end. Yet the means must precede the end.

¹ As the writer must confess that he is a humanist, a great deal of the following argument runs counter to his sentimental predilections, yet none the less he admits its justice and common-sense, and satisfies himself with the belief that the "volume of demand" will help to put things right, since, fortunately, more people are (see later) interested in art than in politics.

How does this concern the evaluation of intellectual pursuits?—simply because some have a greater and some a lesser relation to the material. We cannot say that the subject of government is entirely "material" in its aims, since it is, on the contrary, as much concerned with the personal relations of men as of the organisation of the material means of existence. It is, frankly, a borderline subject. We might say that one aspect predominated and so group it in the intellectual category, or we might disagree and class it as a material activity. At any rate—and this is the point—if we do classify it as an intellectual pursuit we must agree that it is much more closely related to material things than, say, poetry, and *consequently* more *important*, more *necessary*, more *primary*. History is another, less debatable, borderline subject. It is the record not only of man's material progress but of his intellectual activities. It is, of course, a derivation—a subject not of importance as a subject itself but as an aspect of many other subjects. That fact lowers its value in relation to other intellectual pursuits, but if we ignored that fact (which, in practice, we must *not* do) we should decide that it was a more important matter than the purely intellectual pursuits.

Ethics, again, is a more essential study than most in this category, since a large part of its function is the study and propagation of those material aspects of human relationships which are necessary for the continuance of a certain level of human existence, in short it is a study with a biological significance, and biology is, in common with applied science of all kinds, a material matter first and foremost.

And so without departing from our original ideas as

to the primary motive of human activity we have for our guidance taken heed of the fact that existence precedes development, and now are able to evaluate very roughly, but as adequately as is possible, the whole of human needs and activities.

The joint principle is, therefore, that the pursuit which is most essential for the maintenance of conditions necessary for the development of human personality and happiness is the most important, and that when those conditions have been attained an activity is to be valued by the extent to which it helps man to take advantage of them.

A second factor which must influence us to a great extent has yet to be considered, however. For all that has been suggested to the contrary in the previous paragraphs one might suppose that we imagined all reading to be purposive. We have spoken of the relative value of this and that as though all readers were really concerned with values, and, of course, very often they are *not*. Far from it, because, to put the matter in other words, a very large part of reading is to some extent recreative, moreover, to some degree *purely* recreative. This factor compels us to consider book selection from not one but two standpoints.

It is, of course, impossible to give a definition of recreative reading. What is one man's "recreation" would be very hard work for another. Every subject, no matter how abstruse or technical, may provide recreation to some, and the lightest of pastimes for most men may be the work of others, such as, perhaps, reviewers. The "recreative" element is entirely a matter of degree and only as such can it be treated. Thus, there are subjects of least likely and of most likely recreative value. The first are such subjects

as are generally studied purposely and cumulatively with the deliberate intention of applying the knowledge gained to some material or other non-recreational end—such subjects as steam engines or religion. The last are those which are pursued with no conscious aim but to pass time pleasantly. The fact is that, saving those interests which are the epitome of pure recreation (i.e. the lightest of fiction, non-intellectual games and sports with no physical-development properties), the recreative element is not inherent in the subject itself but develops according to the use made of the subject. If a man studies Einstein for the pure love of the intellectual speculations involved and as a rest and change from some non-recreative work, to him Einstein is recreative. There is nothing more to be said about it. When we are concerned with the recreative element we must leave on one side "subject value" and consider instead "use" value.

But, as before said, the recreative use to which subjects can be put varies considerably. In many instances it is so slight as to be negligible—the man in our example who treats Einstein as a pastime is a curiosity, an exception, of whom we can take no practical heed—in others it is paramount—again, the professional chess player, the professional compiler of bridge problems, or the reviewer of novels cannot concern us as such. So we must consider two questions :

(1) The position of those subjects which are to some extent of recreational use, but yet not entirely or necessarily so, and

(2) Our attitude towards the purely recreational.

One thing which must strike us is the difficulty we have in dissociating intellectual from recreational

pursuits. Material pursuits do, of course, provide recreations (e.g. home carpentry, and handicrafts of all sorts, fishing, etc.), but we have no hesitation in stating that *essentially* the subject is *not* recreational. With intellectual matters the opposite is true. Whatever other values they may possess they do in practice provide the recreation of most intelligent people. We humanists believe that to witness the performance of a Shakespearian play is to obtain something more than two or three hours pleasant pastime, that to read a great literary work or look upon master paintings is more than mere recreation—but how could we justify our attitude? If we return to our original definition of the desirable—that they foster human development and happiness—we find the answer. All intellectual, as well as all material activities, must be valued according to that measure. But still we evade the question of recreational value.

Do we not need a new term by which to describe these intellectual pursuits which lead not only to mental and spiritual development but also to recreation? Let us call them “creational” in the non-material sense of the word. A “creational” subject is something more than a “recreational” one in that it is cumulative in its effect. This is a valuable distinction.

Could we imagine a man with so bad a memory that not only the facts and characters of a book were forgotten but also that its psychological stimuli, its spiritual “effect” was lost, we could not consider his reading to be anything but purely recreational. So far as the state of his mind *afterwards* was concerned it would be immaterial what book he read. There would have been no accumulation of knowledge, no increased sympathies or understanding—nothing but

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so much time spent in reading. Such a man, could he exist, would be a most unfortunate one. With us, it is not so much the quality of our perceptions and memories that matter as the quality of our reading. There are books and at times we all read some of them that are incapable of exercising any after effect, books that we don't want to remember any more than we want to remember what cards we had when we were playing bridge last week, books that are, in fact, simply the means to pass time. On the other hand, there are books which we do not forget, books which, since this is not only a question of conscious memory, in some way vague or distinct, definitely affect our future mental development for good or ill. Do not imagine that we are speaking of extreme cases: the times when a man could honestly say "this book, or that sermon, affected my whole life"—an expression often encountered in the sentimental biography—are very rare. In its slightest yet not entirely insignificant manifestations the effect nevertheless very frequently takes place. A Shakespearean performance would not provoke any intellectual effects sufficiently powerful to be noticed even by the persons concerned in more than perhaps one in an audience, but the effect would be there all the same. It would be cumulative. Let there be ten such performances, or a hundred, or a lifetime's opportunities to witness Shakespeare, and the effect *would* become apparent. If it did not we should have no alternative but either to grade the person as absolutely lacking in perception or to dethrone Shakespeare from his position as an artist, since the dramatist who could not work an appreciable effect upon a person of average intellect and sympathies would not be worthy of the title.

And so it is with other intellectual pursuits. They are necessarily cumulative. No man can "study" anything without accumulating knowledge; it would not be study if he didn't. And whenever they are used recreationally they are still cumulative or "creational" to some extent.

Even though it involves repetition it may not be undesirable to restate the argument in a different form.

Let us take the performance of a Bach fugue and of a jazz dance. In the widest sense of the word both are recreational, yet whereas one could be described as of intellectual value no one would so speak of the other. The same difference is seen in the case of the reader of Meredith and the reader of Dell, and in the millions of similar examples one could give of opposite poles in the same magnets for human interest, be it music, literature, drawing, sociology or the stars. There is some quality in the one pole which is not present in the other. If we can discover this quality we can then define the "merely recreational" as differing from the "creational."

We return, therefore, to our original discussion of the right aims of humanity. We decided that the most worth while activities were those which enabled a man to develop his personality to the fullest extent, which enable him to gain from life the maximum of experience, active and passive, and to find in life the greatest possible amount of enjoyment and happiness. If we consider our previous examples in the light of that criterion we shall discover the quality we are seeking. While the Bach fugue could undoubtedly serve all these ends for a sympathetic listener, the jazz could only assist in the attainment of a part of them—and relatively a small part—enjoyment. The reader of

Meredith would find his experience of his fellow men increased, would come to understand better responding phases of his own personality, and he would do (unless he were one of those foolish people who read Meredith as a "duty") find enjoyment, and the happiness resulting from the attainment of one further, perhaps very slight, step toward comprehension of the complexities of life—and most thinking men find their greatest happiness in increasing intimacy with their fellows. The reader of Dehmay will find enjoyment—that is to say, the pleasurable passage of time—but surely little else. The lover of art whose excursions disclosed for him each day more and more of the beauty of nature and of man's endeavours and ideals would consider the whole of the before-mentioned desires satisfied, whereas he who read a volume of studio reminiscences would, again, seek and gain merely the pleasurable passage of an hour or so of leisure.

We can see now the distinction between those pursuits which are "merely recreational" and those which are not. The merely recreational is concerned simply with the attainment of present enjoyment; the other is directed at a more distant, bigger, end; it is part of a lifelong search, a cumulation of experiences, a "development." The merely recreational leaves us where we were¹; the creational takes us a step further on our intellectual (or spiritual) journey.

Nevertheless we must not despise the merely

¹ Though it may and should help indirectly in our other affairs. By few is the merely recreational degraded into an end in itself; by most it is regarded as the rest and the relief of the mind dictated by physical needs, or the development of the body in order that it may enable the mind to function properly. Few of us make gods of our bodies, but we are fools if we neglect to give our minds plenty of rest and our bodies plenty of exercise.

recreational. Instead, we must appreciate its equal claims, since it is as essential a part of life as bread, meditation, or enquiry. We may sometimes look upon the need for recreation as a lamentable waste of time, just as, if we were particularly keen upon an intellectual occupation, we may begrudge the time spent in eating or working for the means to buy food. All the same we do not alter the situation. We are so constructed. We need food and clothing, and we need rest and recreation. We can't get away from this—it may be a limitation or an opportunity, as we care to regard it—and, to come down to the matter in hand, as librarians we cannot ignore the essential part which the more recreational plays in the lives of all men. If we do so we are sadly departing from our intention of making the library the universal provider of all men's needs and desires.

But, let us remind ourselves, we have to evaluate these needs. Since we cannot give all men all they ask we cannot leave the question of recreation at that stage. It is not enough to say "since we must have recreational reading we must have Dell and her kind, so there's an end to it." We have to remember that, subject to certain limitations, Meredith has also a merely recreational value. So have Bach and Michael Angelo. That is an important point. If Bach and Meredith did not give enjoyment, it would not arise. But they do—to those to whom they appeal in that way. We cannot imagine the lover of Beethoven finding even enjoyment in Jean Gilbert,¹ or the Meredithian seeking relaxation in Dell. Not only are

¹ As "music," that is. It is not suggested that the Beethoven lover might not enjoy a good performance of a musical comedy, since in the stage production other elements are involved.

these things different in the extent of their influence : they are also of appeal to different people.

In this we find two separate propositions. Firstly, it is clear that the more the people who can be brought to find enjoyment in things which will give them something *more* than enjoyment the better. And secondly, that if we must choose between those who are getting enjoyment plus something else and those who are getting enjoyment alone we must prefer the former. We must not ignore the latter especially since they are probably much more numerous. Our way out of the difficulty is to evaluate the intellectual interest as higher than the merely recreational.

All subjects may, in theory, be put to recreational use and consequently acquire two values. The importance of a subject other things being equal, will depend upon the degree to which these two values are present. That which combines the maximum of creational value (material or intellectual) with the maximum of recreational value would *seem*, therefore, to be the most desirable, but *only* if we agreed that creational and recreational values were equally important. Obviously that is not the case. Before we can proceed further we must decide the relative importance of the two.

We need have no difficulty. The most futile, sterile attitude towards life—unfortunately it is the philosophy of the bulk of mankind—is that all man need concern himself with is the uneventful, fruitless passage from birth to death, that if he rears and provides the material sustenance for a next generation who can do the same he has performed his duty. This senseless propagation of the human species cannot be justified. We do not suggest that every man should seek directly

to leave this world in some way better through his having lived—only a minority can appreciate such ideals—but we do suggest that a man should seek to make himself better at, say, thirty than he was at twenty, at fifty than he was at forty—not necessarily better so far as others are concerned (though that will follow as a matter of course) but *more worth while to himself*, with keener perception, deeper understanding, greater *personal resources*. Now we did not deny the need for pure recreation. It plays the same part in human life as the period when a motor driver allows his engines to cool before proceeding on his journey. Without recreation the human engines would become overheated. The amount of pure recreation required by any individual will depend upon (a) his physical nature and (b) upon the extent to which he can incorporate recreation with creation, but it stands to reason that any unnecessary time and energy spent in recreation is personal waste. We see, too, from (b) above, that by the amalgamation of creation and recreation the required amount of the latter can be reduced considerably. The more it can be reduced the better for the individual, providing always that the physical element is not ignored. Neither must we take a narrow view of what is creational—it is anything which leads to development. When it is realised that such pleasures as those of family life if properly ordered and appreciated are potent “developing” influences it will be seen how little a man needs to seek deliberately the purely recreational. Yet the need does exist—if for no other reason than that man is seldom sufficiently developed to take advantage of his opportunities (family life, for example, is frequently so badly ordered that it is neither recreational nor creative, often in

fact a direct incentive to seek other recreation)—and when it exists its claims are urgent and must be answered if health and sanity are to be secured.

And so we have our schedule of importance :

(1) The material basis of life must be so secure as to leave man with the necessary time and energy to develop his human qualities

(2) Intellectual and creational work, though the most essential can only be placed second in importance.

(3) The purely recreational is allied to the material in that its only aim is to make the "creational" (2) possible, but since the *creational* can to a great extent provide the means for recreation the purely recreational is actually only of secondary importance

We remarked before that taking any one art or other intellectual occupation we would find at one pole its highest cultural possibilities and at the other its purely recreational forms. The more the recreational and creational factors could be united the better—in other words we would wish that fiction readers would seek something *more* than mere pastime and select their reading accordingly. The lower pole is, however, for practical purposes entirely recreational, and there are also recreational occupations for which there are no intellectual counterparts. We can say, for example, that "as jazz is to Beethoven so is Dell to Meredith," but we cannot say "as jazz is to Beethoven so is cricket to X"—because there is no X. There is no intellectual pursuit which can give the same *kind* of enjoyment as cricket, or bridge or skittles, etc., etc.

Now how can we evaluate these purely recreational subjects? Is it possible to discriminate? Can we say that reading Dell is a better recreation than playing

cribbage, or jazzing better than bridge ? Of course we can't. It is all a matter of personal inclination.

Recreation is, of all man's occupations, that which gives most scope for personal choice. So far as values are concerned it doesn't matter to us what pastime a man adopts so long as it gives him the recreation he desires. The recreation of one man might be penance to another.

Therefore, it follows that as a general principle we should not seek to evaluate the merely recreational excepting in relation to other things. We cannot decide *between* recreations which is more desirable or less desirable, since so far as we are concerned all merely recreational interests are equally valuable. In considering their representation we must only consider the *volume* of demand, as they are all of the same value.

There is one group of subjects which are really very much akin to the purely recreational, but which we are apt to class wrongly as something very different. These subjects, though they are "studied" in the sense that knowledge is accumulated, have little practical value and, more important, a not very high creational value in the best sense of the word. These subjects may be described as "merely of interest"—they are pursued by a desire for cumulative recreation, if such an expression may be permitted, rather than for any more desirable purpose. Such subjects are—and it is hoped that their devotees will not accuse the writer of personal prejudice but will try instead to take an "outside" view—a large number of those hobbies which have no close relation to material or artistic ends (philately as practised by most, the collection of first editions, or objects which have no value but their

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rarity and curiosity), genealogical research, a great deal of local historical research, historical bibliography, etc.

We have been in the habit of vastly over-rating the importance of these "merely of interest" subjects. We have filled our shelves with old parish registers and similar material without regard to the resulting starvation of more valuable subjects. It is time we assessed the real worth of such provision. Undoubtedly it *has* value, but *it is almost entirely recreational*. Moreover, though there are many who are fascinated by these interests for whose tastes we must cater, we cannot honestly pretend that, excepting to the devotee who is not common, this recreational value is of a very high order. No one could assert that the study of the title-pages, or the misprints of books is a superior aid to the development of personality or individual happiness than a study of their contents; that, if a man must collect he would not be better collecting things of beauty and æsthetic value than those with no claims to artistic merit; or that a man is not better engaged in living his own life than in hunting up the bare bones of his ancestors' existence.

These subjects of "interest alone" must be represented, like everything else, in accordance with the volume and value of demand—and we must beware of over-estimating their value, our idea of which is at present influenced by an old and defunct tradition dating from the olden days when libraries were used by a very different class, which comprised a large proportion of bookworms, "antiquaries," and such like. We must remember that the library is *now* the most catholic, the most comprehensive of all public institutions.

Before we leave the subject of evaluation two distinctions must be appreciated, those between

- (a) Primary and secondary subjects, and
- (b) Primary and secondary interests.

These are not very closely related, and the latter is more important in practice.

(a) Any subject may be viewed from different angles and the change in perspective may bring into existence a new subject, related or secondary to it. The great example, cited before, is that of the "history" of mankind. By some curious turn of mind this subject has become quite a distinct study. The history of most other matters, e.g. the history of chemistry, or of music, has remained attached to its primary subject and the students of one are generally students of the other. But the history of man—what has been called in a wide, vague way "political" and "social" history—has wandered away from its primary. This history is but of the record of the effects of the interplay of economic, psychological and physical forces, and it is inconceivable that it can be of practical value to anyone who is not concerned with one of those factors for its own sake—the sociologist, the politician, the anthropologist, or any other student of man and his environment. To these history is of the greatest value. Historical research for its own sake, or unless it is designed to help others to apply its lessons, must be graded as a study of secondary importance.

This is by no means an attempt to minimise the importance of history, but, instead, a criticism of a general attitude towards it which is, perhaps, fortunately becoming less widespread. The teaching of history must not be confined to the teaching of facts, happenings and personalities; it must concern itself

first and foremost with the significance of facts. But that is not our business. What needs to be realised here is that the more closely an historical work, or the historical studies of our readers, is related to primary matters the more important it becomes; the more it is divorced, the less significant and less important it is.

The same applies to all secondary subjects—such as politics (chief of the many “primaries” of which is sociology), the history of all subjects, all that part of religious endeavour which is not definitely theology, etymology, etc., etc. All these are not unimportant; far from it they may be for practical purposes of paramount importance—e.g. sociology would be almost a useless study were there no machinery for government. The point is that they derive their importance from their “primaries” and decrease in value as they lose sight of them. As selectors of books it is our duty to preserve and foster this relationship, to prefer the book on a secondary subject which keep in mind its essential and primary significance to one which fails to do so.

(b) It is perhaps difficult to distinguish between primary and secondary “interests” and primary and secondary subjects since it is largely a matter of degree. The real difference is that secondary interests are almost entirely recreative—the recreative derivatives of subjects which may or may not be merely recreational (but which generally are not). An example will make this more clear:—

(1) The science and practice of government is a primary subject.

(2) The field of practical politics is a secondary subject—it deals with the persons and parties involved in government, their immediate interrelations and

present endeavours to carry out that government ; many factors are involved which do not definitely belong to the province of " government," though its essential purpose is the application of the primary science.

Interest in practical politics may be either (3) primary—directly concerned with its purposes, aims and achievements, or (4) secondary—concerned only with its unessential by-products (" personalities " and " gossip," for example). We all know the kind of books read by those with " secondary " interest, and similarly works are to be found dealing with most activities, the stage, the church, diplomacy, literature or what not.

" Secondary " interests are clearly as before said recreational. There may be some degree of non-recreational value in them, but it depends first upon the value of the primary and then upon the quality of the secondary interest itself.

In two ways must we take cognisance of secondary interests. Firstly we must evaluate them properly, not mistaking the unessential recreational by-product for the real thing. Secondly we must watch our representation lest we mistake the representation of secondary interests for the representation of primary subjects. For example, it is easy to glance at our catalogue and finding, say, 25 books in 792 imagine that we have 25 books on the theatre ; probably only two or three will deal seriously with the primary subject.

Before passing on, however, the writer wishes to stress some general aspects of these methods.

Firstly, it must be kept in mind that all evaluation is " proportional " and " simultaneous," not absolute and progressive. What is meant is this : Were we considering nine subjects valued at 200, 100, 60, 45,

40, 25, 15, 10, and 5 respectively (demand being the same), we should not represent only the first or only the first two as being most important and neglect the remainder. We should¹ represent *all* in proportion to the values. If we were able to provide 1,000 representation units we should provide 400 units of the first, 200 of the second and 10 of the last; if only 200 units could be provided altogether we should only provide 80 of the first and 2 of the last.

Secondly, although the processes of the evaluation of demand and the assessment of volume are kept separate both effect results. They will serve as correctives to one another. This is mentioned to disarm the critic who might jump to conclusions and say, for example, "this man says ethics is a most important subject and wants us to fill our shelves with books on it. How absurd, when hardly anybody would read them!" The second sentence is the answer to his criticism. The juxtaposition of the value and volume will restrain the librarian from filling his shelves with unread books on ethics or any such subjects; but the true evaluation of the subject will ensure that adequate representation of an important but little read subject is made. Conversely, though light fiction and merely of interest subjects are given a low evaluation in actuality the volume of demand will compel large representation—and a justifiably large representation, too.

Thirdly, when we have decided upon the value of a subject as such is it necessary to go any further and discover a definite "library" value? That is to say,

¹ A subject is ignored only when its value and volume of demand are insufficient to allow, on a proportional basis, one unit of representation.

the library is only one of several agencies engaged in the development of human life—there are churches, schools, art galleries, museums and so on. Do they effect our evaluation? No. They only effect “demand.” If these agencies are doing the same work in the same way as the library the demand for library service will be less in accordance with the activity of these other agencies. There is, for practical purposes, no possible distinction to be made between real value and library value.

It must be admitted that much of this discussion on the evaluation of demand remain too general and purely theoretical to be of absolute practical value. This is only natural since we are dealing with principles which concern facts about which we cannot speak accurately. Our difficulties are with the facts, not with the principles. Though it should happen that we have not sufficient knowledge (and in many matters such knowledge is impossible) to assert that one subject is of greater value than another this does not in any way vitiate the general principle that subjects of greater value call for greater representation (the volume of demand being the same). And whenever we *can* decide the relative value of subjects sufficiently accurately (or even when, in cases of doubt, we have arrived at *any* decision¹) the principle becomes of real practical utility.

It must be remembered that these principles will nearly always be applied to individual cases when the element of evaluation will not offer any serious obstacles. For instance, if a librarian with money to add ten books

¹ Which may or may not be correct—it is the decision upon which we base our representation, at any rate, and even if we were without principles we should still have to make decisions.

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had a list of perhaps twenty books on various subjects from which to choose (as would frequently be the case), all of which were more or less desirable, he would be aided by the application of these principles. Needless to say they are equally applicable to the formation of a complete stock, and, though the process would involve immense difficulties and big stretches when no assistance could be given, there can be no doubt that the resulting library would be much better equipped than one constructed on the usual haphazard lines.

At least they will help us to preserve a reasonable sense of proportion, the lack of which was at one time very striking, as any who analyses the composition of the stock of some of our older libraries will see; even now there are librarians and committees who, through want of a scientific basis, magnify, consciously or unconsciously, the importance of the insignificant at the expense of the important. No quality is more desirable in librarians than a sense of proportion, of the relative value or utility of things, and the application of this is really nothing more nor less than the evaluation of demand.

III

THE VOLUME OF DEMAND : ITS RECOGNITION AND ASSESSMENT

If a public library were to supply all the information and other help of all kinds which it is capable of supplying to all the people who could make use of it it would be *satisfying the total volume of demand* for library services. Such would be a Utopian state of affairs. In actuality it is very doubtful whether—because, on the one hand, of our limitations, and, on the other, of public apathy and ignorance of the real nature and extent of a good library service—any library could claim to satisfy one-twentieth part of this total volume.

But—and this is the important point—no matter how large or how small the actual work of the library may be, the total volume of possible demand remains the same. It is independent of the extent or nature of library provision, though the latter may partly satisfy it or stimulate it. It would be the same were the library to be withdrawn, and it would have been roughly the same before the library came into existence. The library merely satisfies it, to a greater or lesser extent. This will, of course, be obvious. It is only another way of saying that the functions of a library are called into being by the needs and desires of the public which it serves, and not created by the library itself. If I want a house I have one builded. My

need for a house existed before and still exists while I have it—the *existence* of the house is not essential to the functions of a house nor to my need for it. In these days of shortage this must be, alas, too obvious.

So by the demand for library provision we mean the sum total of services which a library can perform. When considering the *volume* of demand we shall be concerned only with the *extent* of these services, and not with their value, which we have already considered.

As an initial proposition, then, the volume of demand is equivalent to the total possible services—not only to the actual and definite requests for service, not even only the actual services which are being rendered, but the total possible services.

It may be asked why we should assume that the total possible services are the same as the total volume of demand. This is because a service consists only of the fulfilment of a need. There cannot be services without needs; and demand, including both expressed and unexpressed, actual and possible, is regarded for convenience as equivalent to need. The discussion would not be seriously affected if we spoke of the volume of "need," but, owing to the common restricted usage of that word, "demand" seems a more satisfactory expression.

No one would come to a library for a book unless he in some way needed or desired a book. His coming would represent his demand. The total possible services of the library would not, of course, be represented by the total of such demand—there are many ways in which this service could be increased, in which more people could be made to come, and in which even the library service could be (metaphorically) "taken" to the people. But in all such cases there would have

to be the *need* for a service. We could not offer a book to a man who did not want, need or desire any book whatsoever—or if we did he would not make any use of it. Therefore this initial proportion, that the total volume of demand from a section of the population is equivalent to the total possible services the library can render to them, will be found sound and workable.

This demand will then be capable of division in several ways, two of which we shall consider. First of all there is "actual" and "possible" demand—the latter including such demands as will arise when education and other factors increase the ability of the public to make use of library aids, developing new fields and widening existing ones. Secondly there is "expressed" demand and "unexpressed" demand. This is the most important to us.

Expressed demand includes

(a) All requests for library services, which may or may not be already provided, and

(b) The use which is made of existing provision. This cannot be accepted as an exact measure of demand, however, since we have no means of ascertaining the extent to which this service is really satisfying demand and not merely providing services accepted as substitute. For instance, there are always borrowers who, not finding exactly what they require, take something which they desire much less, though sufficiently for it to be worth their while to take it. We cannot tell what percentage of our issues belongs to this category and what percentage represents fully satisfied borrowers.

These two together, however, are our only guides to the expressed demands for library services.

Unexpressed demands include all those other ways in which the library could, at any given time, function.

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They include all those services which the library could render to people who are unaware that it is the library's duty to render them or who are neglectful of the opportunities offered, all those demands of actual readers who do not express their exact needs but accept substitutes, and the demands of all those people whose lives could be made more interesting and useful to themselves and to others were they to develop interests which would find expression in increased calls upon the library service.

Before proceeding further it will be well to note that, other things being equal, expressed demands should have preference over unexpressed demands, since in the former case there is reasonable certainty that *use* will be made of any services provided, while such need not necessarily follow in the latter.

It stands to reason, therefore, that the greater the percentage of demand which is expressed the better will the library be able to perform its duties and the easier the task of the librarian. At present it represents only a very small proportion of the total demand, and can be divided into three main divisions—(a) *Requests for books or information not already provided*, or for the augmentation of existing provision, "borrowers' suggestions," etc.

(b) *Direct requests for books or information*—whether or not these are in the library. This class, of course, belongs partly to (a) above, and to

(c) *The use made of actual provisions*, but it seems worth while to distinguish it as it forms a valuable guide to a certain part of the further requirements. Whenever requests in (b) cannot be supplied they should be noted and considered as though they were borrowers' suggestions as in (a). Even when the requests are met

by existing provision, though it is clearly impossible to *note* them specifically they should, if possible, be "heeded" or noted generally in some way¹ since issues arising from such requests represent "fully-satisfied demands" and not "substitutes"—and the better able the librarian is to distinguish between these the more readily can he assess the expressed demand.

Issues (c) can, as before said, be regarded as representing expressed demand only to a certain extent depending upon the percentage of "substitute" issues. Yet so far as the main classes, the chief interests and blocks of interest, and the general character of demand is concerned they are a valuable guide. For example, if a reader desires a particular work of music which is not in the library and takes another work that issue is a "substitute" issue. The librarian is given no indication of the actual work required (unless the borrower makes this known by a definite request as in (b) above), but he is shown that this reader is interested in and desires music. The same will apply to any subject. Issues from a particular section of a library are proof of demand for that section. Whether this demand is being adequately and proportionately met can, however, only be ascertained by augmenting the provision and noting whether the issues from the section increase proportionately. Even this will only be a rough guide since there are other factors to be considered,² nevertheless whenever

¹ For example, in the lending department such issues could be marked and a separate statistical record kept. *See later.*

² For example, a limited supply will often cease to be used as the public using it will in time cease to need it, having already made use of it. Unless a new public is taking its place, the issues will therefore naturally decrease, some measure of augmentation being necessary merely to maintain the issues at their previous level.

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augmentation of stock is accompanied by increased issues there is evidence that demand for that section is not yet satisfied.

The real trouble with issue records, however, is that they do not really provide much information as to the nature of the use made of the stock. In the first place issue statistics are never sufficiently detailed to be of much use, and in the second place we have a tendency to forget that their real value is to the librarian and not to the committee or the public. Many librarians are content to be able to present a "record" of the volume of work done, to be able to jubilate over an increase or lament a decrease, which they endeavour to explain by some exterior circumstance such as "bad weather" or "good weather"—either can be made into an equally plausible excuse. They forget that properly prepared statistics can be of considerable assistance in book selection. So much time is spent in all libraries in statistical work that one is tempted to ask whether it is worth while *unless* full advantage is taken of the information provided. On the other hand, when this is done the utility is so great that we are more than justified in spending the little extra time needed to turn the bare records into a real index to the use made of the library and a guide to the volume and nature of a large part of the expressed demand.

For this purpose the division of issues into main classes (e.g. Dewey 100, 200, 300, etc.) is not good enough. Much more detail is necessary. The main subdivisions might well be separated, though there is no reason why the statistics should not be even more detailed—the greater the detail the more useful they will be. At least, whenever the subdivisions represent clearly defined groups of interest they should be

separated. Thus the Dewey 700 class includes several distinct groups of demand—e.g. for photography, engraving, music, etc. The old main division record is quite useless as an indication of demand since the librarian cannot tell whether 1,000 issues from the 700 section include one per cent. of music or fifty per cent. of music. Any augmentation on the issue basis would be quite haphazard. Supposing he decided to add 100 books, ten to each main division, the chances are that the demand for music is much greater than that for engraving, but instead of benefiting proportionately by this augmentation the music borrower only gains the average of all the sections, which may be very unfair. He gains in no way by the new books on engraving. But if this librarian knows the issues from the subdivisions and apportions his augmentation accordingly the music lover (for example) would stand to gain, since, though books on other sections of the fine art division may not be of any use to him, the chances are that most books on music will be, if only to a slight extent.

Therefore issue statistics should be at least sufficiently detailed to indicate groups of demands each of the elements of which are likely to be of some interest of the users of the other elements. Thus the student of taxation will probably be interested in labour problems, production etc., though he may not have the slightest knowledge or desire for knowledge of folklore or Roman law.

As a general rule the Dewey subdivisions (e.g. 320, 330, 340, etc.) and equivalent subdivisions in other classifications represent such groups of demand.

It might even be worth while in special instances to analyse the issues more fully. For instance if a town

on the cleanliness and condition of library stock. There is no justification—not even lack of funds—for retaining in circulation books which have become so soiled that they could not be handled by any reasonably fastidious reader. Dirty books drive away borrowers, give the public library a bad reputation, and limit the extent of its services. A library with a similar or good name, and as an example a large part of religious books and books of the same class; or in the case of immorality class the mere division into two groups for psychology and philosophy respectively might prove sufficient, since the same people are as a rule interested in all branches of philosophy or, conversely, the people who are not at all interested in one branch of philosophy are probably not interested in the whole subject at all. Travel, literature, and history are other classes the detailed analysis of which will not prove so valuable; whereas social science, natural science, useful and fine arts will call for most attention.

It may seem that this detailed analysis of issues will entail considerable labour, but such will not prove to be the case. Other, perhaps slight, information as to expressed demands will be obtained from binding records, "bespoken book" requests, withdrawals, etc. We would not suggest that the busy librarian should go out of his way to seek such information, but would remind him that wherever he has other occasion to deal with such records he should be alive to the possibility of finding in them information of use in the work of book selection and "library-building."

Examination of the shelves is a most fruitful method of obtaining guidance. To be effective this must be thorough, but since a librarian could work systematically section by section this task should not

may be effected. The following are, however, a few suggestions :

(a) Readers should be encouraged first of all to state their exact requirements. We all know that hundreds of readers and borrowers are too timid or when unwilling to seek staff assistance, but the somewhere in the book. Enquiries on the part of all

From the label we can tell how long this hesitancy, intervals a book has been used, and from its service, many conclusions may be made. For instance :

(1) Frequent issues denote demand for that subject ; to a less extent, for the actual book.

But (2) "over frequent" issues may indicate that the book is not altogether suitable for the particular kind of demand. If, for example, a book would seem to involve fourteen days' reading, and few have (after allowing for intervals on the shelves) retained it for that length of time, it may mean that many borrowers have found, on examination, that it was unsuitable. Here, of course, we must not jump to conclusions—the reader may only have wanted to refer to a single chapter—yet some information might well be obtained by a wise and careful examiner.

(3) Infrequent issues mean either (a) that the subject is not in great demand or (b) that the book itself is unsatisfactory (e.g. out of date, of the wrong kind, in bad condition, dirty or unattractive).

Comparison of all the books on that subject, or (if there are no better books with which it may be compared) the judicious addition of a new work on the same subject, will show whether (a) or (b) is responsible for the neglect.

Since the point will not arise in any other connection, we might take this opportunity to express our opinion

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of experts, teachers, and all others working in relation with the public. It is not desirable to go into the question of how far expert advice is useful or otherwise, but two points may be made in this connection. Firstly, it very frequently happens that where such advice is given the adviser has in mind actual people who would use the books recommended; the teacher is thinking of his students, the engineer of his workmen, the priest of his congregation, and so he is virtually *expressing the demands* of others. Secondly, the librarian is generally unwise to accept expert advice when it is in opposition to his appreciation of general principles. By all means make use of it, but let it rather concern specific books (e.g. which is the best of a certain kind, or to what extent will a book answer certain requirements) than the extent or nature of provisions. Only the librarian can say how many books he should provide on a certain subject, since he alone knows how many he should provide on all other matters.

Valuable as the expressed demand undoubtedly is, it only indicates a small part of the "total possible services" the library can render. What the bulk of these are the librarian must seek to ascertain by a different method of investigation.

The following statements will indicate the nature of this investigation :

Firstly, there is a large percentage of the stock common to all libraries and comprising works which everyone expects to find in a public library. For these there will be little expressed demand; their presence is taken for granted and they are made use of without comment or special notice. These works represent a large body of unexpressed demand. Exactly what

these works are the librarian will be taught by experience. Any trained librarian could build up perhaps 75 per cent. of the stock of a new library with absolute certainty that good use would be made of each and every item.

Secondly, nearly every demand made upon a library will be represented by some *extra-library* interest, and, conversely, nearly all extra library interests will become the subject of library demand—which may or may not be expressed.

Thirdly, some demands will be general (that is to say, common to all libraries and, roughly speaking, equally active at all times), others local or otherwise special to a particular library or class of library, or special in regard to time (e.g. topical, “new” interests and developments, etc.).

Putting these three statements together, it becomes clear that the experience of the librarian as to what constitutes the basic essential stock of all libraries will help him to judge the nature of *general* demands, whereas an examination of all extra library interests with a view to ascertaining those peculiar to a locality and those operating to an unusually large or unusually small extent, and so on, will enable him to judge the nature and likely extent of local and special demands.

For general demands the librarian's experience can therefore be taken as an adequate guide. Theoretically it would be possible for these to be discovered by an examination of the various general interests (needs and desires) responsible for them, but in practice the task would be immense and extremely difficult, and it is unlikely that the result would be as satisfactory as the body of knowledge gained by librarians through-

out the country and of all generations. In this particular work the bibliographical aid to book selection will, if it truly summarises and co-ordinates the experiences of different librarians, render one of its most valuable services.

Before passing on we may state that instances of general demands are those for the classics of literature, music, art, etc. "general" and "popular" works on most subjects, standard biographies of men and women of national or universal fame, etc.

Local demands are, as before said, of two classes—the *specifically local demands*, such as need not be common to all districts, and *special local volumes of demand* for general subjects. These classes will be dealt with in detail shortly—for the present it may be said that the demand for books on woollen manufactures in a textile town would be an example of the first, and the increased call for music in a town in which there is a large conservatoire or a permanent orchestra is an instance of the second. Demands special-in-regard-to-time are those which, though (maybe and probably) general as regard to locality, for some reason occur only for periods, or occur at irregular wide intervals, or which are quite new (and which may or may not in time come to belong to the category of general demands). For these the librarian's *general* experience can be of no avail, though, of course, his experience of dealing with previous special demands will help him to assess and evaluate new ones.

Specifically local demands will arise from the presence of the following factors :

- (a) Local industries.
- (b) Local conditions.
- (c) Specifically local interests and activities.

Special local volumes of demand for general subjects will arise from

(d) The presence of local agencies for the assistance of general interests or

(e) The absence locally of such usual agencies.

(f) Local characteristics, predilections, tastes and other reasons for increased or decreased interest in general subjects.

Let us consider these groups more fully.

(a) (1) First we must ascertain fully the exact nature and extent of local industries. The librarian might well prepare a schedule showing the following :— The name of each firm, precisely what products are manufactured, how many men are employed and how many of these are skilled and unskilled workmen, technical or professional men, and “improvers” and students. The various firms can then be classified, so that those engaged in the same industry can be considered as a whole. Probably much of this information could be obtained from the local Chamber of Commerce, but there is no real reason why it should not be given by the firm themselves. There could be little objection if it was shown that this enquiry was designed to help the library to assist the industry and those engaged in it. It would, incidentally, be good publicity, and much expert advice on the actual books most likely to be of service would be secured as well.

(2) It would be necessary to discover the extent to which books can help. This will differ considerably. The more advanced the processes of manufacture and the larger the percentage of skilled technical workers employed the greater will be the need for books, and the greater the amount of routine work and unintelli-

gent labour the less will it be. If there were 1,000 men engaged in the manufacture of electrical apparatus and 1,000 in brick manufacture it is clear that the provision of the same amount of literature on the two subjects would be foolish.

(3) Thirdly, the percentage of the different kinds of information required must be ascertained. The works manager does not need the same books as the workmen. This percentage will differ according to the nature of the industry.

(4) Do the firms themselves possess any library? If so is it available to all or part of their staff? If not the latter can it be made available? Can it be made available to any extent to the workers in other firms, or to the general public? It is doubtful whether we grasp all our opportunities in this last respect. Most manufacturers are men of great public spirit, and, though naturally they have first call upon their own libraries, arrangements for them to be deposited in the public library *can* frequently be made. When this is done (not only by manufacturers but by societies and schools, etc.) the librarian should undertake that the owners shall not suffer by the deposit. They must be given preferential treatment and this can easily be arranged. For example, it could undertake that, though the books were available to all users of the Reference Library, they would only be lent to the firm's employees (or the members of the society, or the students of the school, as the case may be); or they may be lent to all on condition that the general reader would return them when required by those for whom they were primarily provided. We may fear to make elaborate restrictions and special regulations, but in practice such arrangements are quite satisfactory as

a rule. Of course we shall avoid *depending* too much upon such provisions.

Such enquiries will only cover the large "blocks" of production, which may represent only a small part of local industries. There are, in all branches of manufacture, businesses too small and too numerous to treat in this way. In other very important occupations, such as agriculture, fishing, etc., the large "firm" is seldom found. For information as to the extent of these the librarian must have recourse to local census returns where fairly full figures are given. The summary tables of "locally important single occupations, etc.," are especially useful.

(b) Local conditions effect library provision to an extent which, though undoubtedly large, we are quite unable to estimate. Every librarian will have observed, however, that the bulk of his readers are drawn from the "middle" classes. Further detailed enquiry would no doubt be helpful and a systematic investigation of this matter would be worth while. It would be advantageous to know the nature and extent of the use made of libraries by the moneyed classes, professional men of different types, clerks, artisans, skilled and unskilled workmen and so on. The figures would present many striking differences. Then, as the proportions of these classes are different in every town the demand for library service will differ. And, thirdly, we would be in a position to set about increasing the use made by the least library using classes by giving special attention to their requirements, organising suitable publicity and so on.

A survey of the occupations of the people will help us to serve their vocational needs, and a social survey to cater for their non-vocational demands. As the

non-vocational interests of a community are no less vital to its well being it is hoped that someone will undertake this difficult but most interesting task.

(c) In many other ways the life of one town differs from that of another and the more we know of these factors the better will be the library service. It is surely unnecessary to elaborate this statement.

Special local volumes of demand for general subjects will, of course, arise from the previously mentioned factors. There are other causes however.

(d) In some towns we will find many adult educational organisations, literary and scientific societies, music clubs, theatres presenting a good repertoire, lectures, churches which are a vital influence, active political organisations and many other evidences of an intellectually stimulated population; in others these are sadly lacking. In the first case they prove the existence of keen local interest, and this invariably means greater demand for library service.

(e) When these agencies are wanting, however, either of two states of affairs may reign. Either the public interest is there, though unorganised, in which case the need for the library as a substitute for other agencies will be greater. Or, the public interest may be non-existent, and then the librarian must assume the role of the creator of interest so far as he may—he must set out to stimulate demand.

(f) To this group belong a number of vague but not unimportant causes of demand. Local characteristics may be difficult to define, yet the fact remains that the tastes and predilections of, say, the inhabitants of a Lancashire mining town are not those of a Dorsetshire rural district. A few instances of the more tangible of these local characteristics will show how we may

study our locality. Local "dialect" is more prominent and of greater significance in some districts (e.g. Lancashire, Somerset) than in others (e.g. the home counties). In the former there will be much call for dialect literature; in the latter the very literature will be non-existent. "Traditions" and "history" influence to some slight extent the tastes of readers. In a town from which, say, some early American colonists set sail some centuries ago the present inhabitants are in a vague way "personally" interested in American history and affairs.

We must not look upon local history as a severely limited subject. Interests born of a study of local history may and often do lead a reader into wider and more general fields. Without doubt the inhabitants of a town in which there are many old and beautiful buildings are more interested in architecture in general than the dwellers in a mushroom city; certainly the "nature" of their interest in architecture will be different; to the former the history of architecture will appeal, to the latter its practical constructive aspects. The natural setting has this effect too. When the local geological conditions are striking there will be more students of geology; where fossils abound we will need to look to our palæontological section. The implications of this section are unending.

We pass then to demands special in regard to time. Here, as everywhere in this essay, the author's necessity to invent the new terminology of a new subject causes him to use terms and expressions which, though they may be awkward and seem involved or indistinct in their significance, yet appear to him those best able to express briefly his meanings. As they are used consistently and are fully explained he trusts the

reader will find no difficulty if he is reasonably careful to assist the writer by his close attention. By "demands special in regard to time" we mean, therefore (as said before), those which, though (maybe and probably) general as regard to locality, for some reason occur only for periods, or recur at irregular wide intervals, or which are quite new (and which may or may not eventually come to belong to the category of general demands).

To begin with it will be clear that they are all merely extensions of general demand, as a few examples will show. That most evil and undesirable state of affairs, a war, will arouse considerable interest in, and demand for information concerning, the various countries involved, the immediate situation and its antecedents, the armies, navies and so on concerned, etc. This demand is but an extension of the general demand for historical and other works, but it belongs to the class of special-time demands because it is called into existence by the war and will cease (or subside very considerably) at the conclusion of the war, if it even lasts so long. Again, in an agricultural area an epidemic of plant disease would cause a demand for information which, also, would only be co-existent with the epidemic. Of demands recurring irregularly, the increased demand for books on social and political matters at the time of an election is an example. Frequently the provision made will hold good until the demand recurs; sometimes it will not, or its extent may differ. In the example we have given this is shown. In the 1923 election the subject of interest was (chiefly) the free trade issue; at the previous election it was the capital levy in particular and the socialist programme in general. The librarian must

be able to say "an election is coming, and the issue will be so and so" and act accordingly. If he waits for expressed demand he will be too late.

The demand for new subjects will always be greatest during the period when general interest has been aroused and before the subject has come to be regarded as one of the accepted factors in life. Then, not only is there greater interest but there is greater need for information. Take wireless telephony as a topical instance. Just now it is a comparatively "new" subject. Thousands of new people are learning of its utility to them personally; thousands are constructing apparatus. But in time—in this example it will probably be a long time—people will take no more interest in wireless apparatus than they do in piano-forte manufacture. They ceased to be interested in the "means" and become content to enjoy the "end." Relativity, psycho-analysis, electrons are such subjects; and the circulation of the blood, the rotation of the earth, *were*, once.

In brief a new subject will always create a demand out of proportion to its ordinary value, simply because it is something upon which many people suddenly wish to inform themselves. All those who want to know about telegraphy have had many years in which to gain their information, but with the new subject they have not had that time.

It follows from the preceding that these three types of demand call for different methods of assessment. The library will not function completely unless they are all considered and given their due importance. We are not speaking now of the *evaluation* of the demand, but of the estimation of the volume of demand, in so far as it is not indicated directly (expressed).

Having, by the methods indicated before, decided that the *cause* for a demand is present, how can we estimate its volume and the amount of provision desirable? We have decided, for example, that since there is a shipbuilding yard in the locality, or a regular series of University Extension lectures, or a high infantile mortality rate, there must be a demand for our assistance in these matters—but what is the possible use that can and will be made of any help we can give? That is a difficult problem; every subject will need thorough individual examination, so it is impossible to do more than indicate the lines of such an examination.

So far as “general” demands are concerned we assume that they are of an average volume and that the percentages for the various subjects will be roughly taught by experience and “expressed” indications. With local and special demands this is not the case. To estimate their volume we must consider five points.

Firstly, what percentage of the population is actively concerned? The University Extension lectures will affect only the students and perhaps their immediate friends; the plant disease only the farmers; the shipbuilding only those engaged in it; the high infant mortality at least half of the population; the war, everyone.

But, the second point, the smaller the number engaged the larger the percentage of them will, as a general rule, require and demand assistance. Probably all the U.E. lecture students will ask for books, whereas a lamentably small portion of those whose behaviour would reduce the infant mortality rate will, or are likely to be brought to, seek help.

Thirdly, to what extent can the special demand be

helped by library provision? And what amount of assistance is necessary if it is to be at all efficacious? For instance, whatever the actual volume of the demand may be, it is clear that in some subjects the whole ground must be covered if this is to be answered at all. The workers in an industry, or the like, will be concerned with practically the whole range of knowledge involved in its operations, and for every matter so included there will be a demand for which there can be no substitution. Unless a cotton finisher can obtain, let us say, the most complete available information on calendering the library can be of little value to him in respect of that demand.

Fourthly, for every subject, special as well as general, there will be demand of varying degrees and nature. Full satisfaction calls for completeness of representation in this respect. For example, the student of electrical engineering will not require the same books as the consulting engineer, nor the practical operative electrician the same as the manager, and so on.

Fifthly, as well as practical need for information local and special demands will arouse more "interest" which needs to be considered as a part of any special or local demand. Such "interest," coming from people who are not engaged in any way in the industry, will result, in a coal mining area, in a greater demand for popular books on this subject than will be present in agricultural areas, etc.

From the foregoing it will be clear that the librarian is as unable to ascertain with scientific accuracy the *volume* of demand as to decide on the exact relative value of demand. What then, the critic may ask, is the value of all this discussion? "You say," he continues, "that representation will be made in

accordance with a joint consideration of the volume and value of demand, yet you admit that neither of these factors can, in practice, be estimated."

The answer to this criticism is twofold. In the first place, as the shortcomings of any system of scientific book selection are obvious to all it would be foolish for the author to claim absolute practicability where it cannot exist; it is, in fact, to the advantage of all that we should realise clearly the limitations of the study. The point is that such knowledge of value and volume as we do possess or can obtain will prove more useful if applied systematically, even though that knowledge is very far from complete or adequate. In any case, the only way in which the critic could improve the position would be for him to set to work and compile the table showing the relative evaluation of all things and then to take a census of all men's needs. Perhaps when he is busy he might find time to square the circle and discover the secrets of alchemy.

Secondly, a knowledge of principles is of constant value since, though the need to apply them to the whole facts to which they *could* be applied may never arise, they will help in those single decisions or sectional problems which are always confronting the librarian. Such questions are

- (a) Whether a subject is sufficiently represented.
- (b) Which of two or more subjects should be given preference, when a choice is made necessary by financial or other limitations.
- (c) Whether a subject should be represented at all, in certain circumstances.
- (d) What proportions of representation should be made of the various "kinds" of books dealing with a subject.

(e) Which "kind" of representation should be preferred in a locality where provision must be limited.

(f) How the library can best cope with special and local interests, and the extent to which they are of importance as compared with general demands

Every librarian will be able to add to this list other instances where a systematic basis of principles will render satisfactory book selection more possible than it was with the old haphazard methods. The system will also indicate a general routine of critical procedure.

The general method of procedure may be summarised thus :

(a) There are certain people in a locality (among other people) who desire information on the subject "X." [*The existence of demand.*]

(b) They (with other people) have provided a public library to give them information on this (and other) subjects. [*The library is designed for service.*]

(c) The librarian is or becomes aware of the existence of the subject "X" and knows that there is some, as yet undefined, demand for information on it.

(d) He endeavours to learn how important "X" is as a subject. [*Evaluation.*]

(e) He compares this importance with the importance of other subjects for which there are demands. [*Proportional evaluation.*]

(f) He endeavours to find out how many people require the information. [*Assessment of volume of demand.*]

(g) Then he considers what "kind" of information they require, and how many require each kind—technical, popular, etc. [*See Chapter V, The Variety of Demand.*]

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(h) Then (unless he is concerned with the formation of a new library) he ascertains how far existing provisions will meet the different kinds of demand, and

(i) The extent and kind of additional information he needs to provide.

(j) This information being found in books, he then turns his attention to the supply, finding out which and how many books are necessary to give the required service.

The process of book selection is now complete.

IV

THE CREATION OF DEMAND

It might be objected that if we are content to build up our library on a basis of existing demand we are going to sacrifice some of our power to help forward the progress of the world. We shall march with it, but we shall not help to lead. Are there not means by which we can assist in the improvement of demand, in the bettering of conditions, desires and tastes? Can we take a part in the furthering of education (in the widest sense of the word) or must we be satisfied with meeting demands stimulated by other agencies and circumstances?

To express this in practical terms: To what extent can and should the library anticipate demands that do not yet exist with the idea that this extra provision will provoke or increase interest in any subject? Clearly there is no other way in which the library can become an active stimulating agency.

This question is one of great importance, and provides a basis for much controversy. We are enquiring not only to what extent the library can create, but also whether it *should* attempt to do so.

Let us approach the subject by way of an example—the old one of Meredith and Ethel M. Dell. We have decided (for the sake of illustration) that the works of the former author are of ten times the value of the latter, the demand for which is, however, ten times

larger than that for Meredith. So we have given them each equal representation (say twenty volumes of each, including duplicates) We will presume further that this representation of Meredith is quite sufficient to meet the existing demand for his works ¹ Now we have great belief in the work of Meredith and deplore the small demand for him, the increase of which we think would be of value to the community. *Can* we, by any means, increase the value of demand for Meredith? We might arouse interest by lectures and study circles, but that would be to utilise extra-library influences with which we are not now concerned. We might do something by systematic recommendation of Meredith, but that would be taking upon ourselves the office of teacher, which may not be a desirable development, and, besides, it may have unforeseen and dangerous effects upon our work if we were not extremely judicious.² There are only two other methods—we could either increase the stock of Meredith in the hope that the sheer force of numbers, the increased opportunity to borrow, and the greater prominence given them would in time lead to increased borrowing; or we could starve competing writers so that readers were compelled either to take Meredith (or similar writers) or nothing at all. This latter would be clearly a grossly wrong procedure, though it is in effect that proposed by those who would limit fiction in public libraries to the classical and standard writers. “We believe,” they say, “that Scott, Dickens, Hardy, Meredith, Conrad and the like should be read, and we

¹ The demand for Dell, will, of course, *not* be adequately met, since, according to the factors guiding representation, no fewer than 200 volumes would do that.

² The man who was always having Meredith pushed down his throat might object and even cease to use the library.

do not see the value of Dell, Cullum, Zane Grey, Wodehouse, etc. So we confine our representation to the first class. If you don't like them you must lump them " This idea is so prevalent that the objections to it should be stated.

(1) That section of the community which wants Dell and Co. is given nothing for the money it provides towards the upkeep of the library.

(2) Therefore the functions and possibilities of the library are limited accordingly.

(3) The practice defeats its own object. Those who don't want Conrad, etc., don't want him and will stay away, whereas experience always shows that in a large proportion of readers the quality of the fiction read improves gradually year by year. The worst ceases to satisfy and, especially if there is sensible and well-directed guidance step by step, it is replaced by the slightly better until the reader reaches the highest level on which his mental capacity will allow him to stay without loss of enjoyment and recreation. Instances of readers who have thus climbed through Ethel M. Dell, Ridgwell Cullum, Maud Diver, Mrs. Sidgwick, etc., to May Sinclair, Sheila K. Smith, and then to Hardy, are known to all observant librarians.

(4) Any arbitrary claims to superior knowledge or a right to dictate to readers is undesirable in itself.

Therefore we have only one legitimate and satisfactory method of increasing or creating demand and it is to increase representation out of proportion to existing calls. It follows from the above that even this is only legitimate when it can be done without involving the sacrifice of other interests—the creation of fresh demand must come after the satisfaction of that which exists. For instance, in the above example we could only

provide 21 Meredith's when we had already given our readers 20 Dell's. If, though we knew 20 of each to be the satisfactory stock, we had only been able to supply 19 of each we should be departing from our general principles if we provided two more Meredith's and no Dell's, instead of one of each.

We must not, moreover, be over optimistic in our estimation of the effect of increased representation.

The truth of the matter is that in nine cases out of ten (at least) books are read only because the public wants to read them. If only ten people want to read Meredith we *might* provide a thousand copies without netting an eleventh reader. At the same time the probability is that increased representation would increase issues, for several reasons. In the first place our systematically proportioned stock would probably not allow for much shelf display of those authors where demand and supply are nearly balanced. Increased representation will help to ensure that constant availability of an author's works which will catch all extra and casual demands. Secondly, this presence of books on a shelf will arouse a certain amount of curiosity, though this will be largely discountenanced by the prejudice against "books which are always in." Thirdly, they will represent a larger percentage of the stock from which selection is made, so that whenever this choice is haphazard or wide in its scope the odds in favour of the "pushed" book being taken are, on arithmetical grounds alone, greater.

It is in the classified non-fiction sections of the library, however, that the creation of interest will find most scope. It will be perhaps more in the nature of widening the range of interest than in creating it anew, but the educational possibilities of such a process are very great.

Whenever a reader in search of definite information acquires the habit of examining certain shelves he will naturally, when his immediate needs are satisfied, pass on to the other works on cognate subjects. The classification will ensure that these are of some appeal and value to him since they will deal with more or less closely associated topics. In this way his interests will be developed and led into new fields, among which might be those in which it is desired to stimulate interest. This is a powerful argument in favour of classification and open access.

In general, then, it may be assumed that whenever a subject is represented for which there is no actual demand there will be some creation of interest in it. As this interest is more likely to be aroused in readers concerned with cognate and related subjects this creation of interest will be greatest in a fully classified library and almost impossible (by this means) in a "closed" library.

There is also the factor of the browser and the "wanderer among the shelves" who might well be drawn to new subjects, but the value of this casual stimulation will not be so great as it is when a student of a definite subject is attracted by a new development. For example, in another chapter we mentioned infantile mortality as an extremely important subject in which there was not sufficient interest. In a classified library different aspects of this problem would be shelved near labour problems (housing, etc.) and public health. Should any student of these two matters be brought to consider the mortality problem by reason of the proximity of the literature it is more than likely that much of value would result. But we must not be over optimistic. The trouble is that the people most in

need of information and by whose actions most could be done to reduce the mortality belong to a class which does not use the library and which therefore cannot be influenced by library facilities for gaining knowledge. Perhaps in this respect we are under no greater disadvantage than most other agencies. There is an amazing amount of preaching to the converted in the world at the present. Health committees' "Baby Weeks" attract only those who are reasonably able to look after their children, and so on. So perhaps we should be content that we are able to do the little we can do.

Having considered how much the library *can* do we still face the question of how much we *should* do. In the first place it is clearly the prime function of a library to meet and keep pace with existent demands, and no attempt to create demand should precede the reasonable fulfilment of that prime function.

Secondly, we must have a distinct and undeniable justification which will be accepted by at least the majority of the public. It must be realised that whenever the library takes upon itself the creation of demand it is becoming to that extent a propagandist agency. And propaganda can be concerned with sectional or controversial interests and with general interests. Clearly propaganda of the latter type alone is permissible. The librarian (or committee) who sought to stimulate interest in Socialism or Chinese pottery, Unionism or chess, Wesleyan Methodism or raffia work would be guilty of abusing his (or their) position. But this could not be said of the librarian who increased the provision of works on public health, any art in general, political economy in its non-party aspects or any subject which is not contrary to the

beliefs and desires of any considerable section of the public.

The stimulation of demand seems desirable, therefore, only in three classes of circumstances.

(1) Whenever in a locality a demand is non-existent which is generally to be found in other districts it may usually be argued that there is a certain general loss to the community which should be made good. For example, if the people of a town seemed to have a relatively small knowledge of and desire for literature, and since there is no question that the study of this art will help to develop the minds of readers and add to their enjoyment of life, the librarian would seem justified in doing his utmost to improve matters in this respect.

(2) There are certain subjects the propagation of which it is universally agreed is beneficial to the community at large. The library can take its share in their promotion without fear of criticism or of doing an injustice to any section of the public. Such subjects are most matters connected with public health and personal physical welfare—housing, the prevention of disease, personal hygiene, the care of children, etc., etc.—and moral questions of *undoubted* advantage—the prevention of prostitution, the reduction of drunkenness (not necessarily prohibition, which is a different matter from “temperance” and one which is open to controversy).

(3) The spreading of definite *knowledge* (of facts apart from any controversies that might arise from them) and of the love of beauty and pursuit of happiness is a work in which no librarian need hesitate to engage

Apart from these we will do well to admit that our

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best service will be rendered if we keep closely in touch with the definite existent needs of our readers, neither attempting to hurry forward the march of progress nor lagging behind. The pursuit of such ideals will always bring us enough work and to spare.

V

THE VARIETY OF DEMAND

It is now necessary to discuss in greater detail the question, summarised in an early chapter, of the variety of demand. It is clear that every subject may be treated in a number of ways in order to answer the different varieties of demand for information. An example of this was given before, but another may be taken, in order to expose an important distinction. The literature of "ants" is quite a small one, yet it can be divided into at least two distinct "varieties"—popular and scientific. The books in each division would be quite (or practically) useless to those who required the other. Now there are still further ways in which the whole literature of "ants" would be divided, e.g. into those works which dealt with them as insects (scientific or popular works) and those which considered them as pests. *But*—and this is the point to be noticed—these are not "varieties of demand" in our sense of the expression; they are the subdivision of a group of (two) subjects into its parts. The subject "ants as objects for natural history study" and "ants as a pest" are two related but quite different subjects. It is improbable that one who is "pestered" with ants will care to read of their wonderful ways, unless, maybe, he is blessed with a keener sense of humour than most of us enjoy. Similarly books on the pianoforte may deal with (a) its history, (b) its

construction, (c) its tuning, or (d) pianoforte playing. These are *not* varieties of demand but separate subjects for any *one* of which there may be "varieties of demand," e.g. a highly technical work on the construction of pianofortes for the use of the skilled designer of pianoforte mechanism (such a work as would, for instance, devote much space to details of problems in applied acoustics), and a popular handbook on simple repairs (such as Cassell's "Work Handbook"). Both of these deal with the same material, with the same ends for the same purposes, but are for a different class of user and to answer a different degree of needs.

It may seem unnecessary to stress this point, yet it is one of considerable importance. It is quite conceivable for a public library to possess books *on* every subject under the sun, not one of which, however, was of the maximum value to *any* member of the actual public. There is a danger which consists in trying to fit our public to our books, and unless we escape it we cannot do our full work. Our funds may not enable us to evade the danger, but nevertheless we should not rush into it blindfold nor waive the matter aside when it is brought to our notice. But do we ever do so? you ask. Sometimes. For example we possess Richter's Organic Chemistry and Mellor's Inorganic and Theoretical and a few popular frankly unscientific productions of the calibre of "Wonders of Modern Chemistry." A student comes along pointing out that the former are too advanced and too comprehensive for him as yet, whereas the latter are useless to him. Can we ignore his claims? His is a fresh "variety of demand." Unless we meet his requirements we are not answering his demand.

All this, of course, sounds very like suggesting that we should give every reader exactly what he asks for. And, in truth it is—and yet it isn't. If we had unlimited funds and unlimited space we could perhaps do nothing better than provide every reader with his exact requirements;¹ but we cannot do so—and in fact this is not altogether deplorable since there is an undoubted value in the "selective" nature of a public library where the good is thrown into greater prominence than would be the case were such a state of affairs as before suggested to exist. Since we are limited, however, we need not lose sight of individual requirements. It is the sum of individual satisfactions that make up our work. Every "good" issue is the satisfaction of an individual demand. The only result of our limitations, in this respect, is that we need to place together the common needs of several individuals, since, as our work is limited, we are better justified in serving the many than the few. Nevertheless, in every case, it is but a gathering of several individual interests—maybe many (as when they are of low value), maybe few (as when they are of high value).

Therefore it is nearly as important that we should consider the "variety of demand" as that we should represent the "subject" of demand. Had we to choose between buying a first book to represent a subject of low value and small volume and buying one to represent a fresh variety of demand for a subject which was already represented, we would need to consider the relative volume-value figures for both. For example, presume that we are able to add one volume to the technology section this month, and we must choose between two demands. One is for a first

¹ Subject to certain reservations, as in the case of doubtful books.

book on the bacteriology of water supply ; the other for an elementary work on sewage disposal, on which subject advanced works have already been provided. For the sake of argument the volume of demand for the former is 5, and its value assessed as $40 = 200$; for the latter it is 6 and 100 respectively $= 600$. Certainly we should prefer to satisfy the latter demand even though this leaves the former subject altogether unrepresented. The broad and long of this principle is that we should keep in mind the actual requirements of the public so far as we are able.

This question of the variety of demand has a further implication, which is that we cannot regard our representation of a subject as complete unless it includes all those "varieties" for which there is a demand. The idea has long been current that when a library possessed the best and most comprehensive work on certain subjects it had done its duty once and for all. Undoubtedly there is some truth in this idea since, so long as it is impossible to *increase* representation, the best and most comprehensive work is of most value since it will meet a larger percentage of demand than any other work. But it can never answer the *whole* of demand, and the danger lies in the assumption, which is liable to grow insidiously, that it can. There is always the risk that we pass on to fresh, less important, subjects for representation, leaving the other needs inadequately met. When this is done we are falling into the undesirable practice of subject representation instead of adopting demand representation.

Nevertheless some basis for choice between fresh varieties of demand and fresh subjects is needed, and this can be derived from general principles. All that is necessary is that, so far as possible, that part of the

total volume of demand for a subject which is for a particular *variety* of that demand must alone be considered in the first case, and a fresh representation number derived from this volume and the value of the subject as a whole. E.g. the value of subject X is 7 and the volume of demand is 80. Of this demand there are three varieties, each comprising 50 per cent., 37.5 per cent., and 12.5 per cent. of the total volume of demand. The representative numbers of the three varieties are, therefore, $7 \times 40 = 280$, $7 \times 30 = 210$, and $7 \times 10 = 70$. Let us presume that the third variety is unrepresented and that we need to choose between it and a fresh subject for which the representation number is 50. Clearly the fresh variety should have preference over the fresh subject. On the other hand, were the representation number of the fresh subject more than 70, it should be preferred.

A more common difficulty will arise, especially in the small library, when representation must be so limited that it is impossible to provide adequately for all varieties of demand. The same applies, in all libraries, to subjects which have such low representation numbers that the amount of information provided is too small to embrace more than one or two varieties. What is the best procedure in such instances?

Let us imagine that we have decided to purchase ten volumes on a subject, for which there are three varieties of demand—advanced technical, elementary technical and popular, say. Now one of several conditions may apply:

(a) It may be possible to estimate the volume of demand for the three varieties and to purchase for each of the three a proportion of volumes, *each section of which will be adequate*. If this is possible there is

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no difficulty. If three volumes, for instance, will satisfy the demand (as adequately as we are generally able) for advanced technical information, four volumes that for elementary information, and the remaining three the popular interest, we should obviously divide our ten volumes accordingly.

(b) But this may not be possible. (Remember that in this connection we are supposed to be *limited*—as we always are in practice. We cannot, without being unfair to other sections of the library, here provide eleven or more volumes.) If we provide only three advanced works, although only 30 per cent. of the volume of demand is for them, we may be unable to cover the ground adequately; we may not be able to serve at all satisfactorily *any* of the advanced students. What should be done in this case?

First of all it may frequently be possible, by judicious selection of the individual books, to cover the ground, not entirely to our satisfaction, but reasonably, and so a way would be found out of the difficulty.

If this cannot be done we have no alternative but to sacrifice one or two of the varieties for the advantage of the other. Clearly it is better to satisfy adequately one section of the public interested in that subject than it is to fail to satisfy all three. Which variety should have preference? Volume of demand is, of course, a vital consideration, but when it does not give a plain indication choice must be made and a factor of much weight is the possibility, or otherwise, of other agencies (including the individual) filling the breach. We as librarians should never *expect* any section of the public, before any other, to *buy* their own books, but in a case like this we are perhaps wise to consider the possibility. Advanced works being, as a rule, more

expensive, readers are less likely to be able to obtain them if we fail to provide them. Therefore, volume of demand being equal, we should, if must be, sacrifice the elementary student and the general reader. This is only a general rule—circumstances alter cases and *must* be considered. So, in our example, if three advanced books are inadequate we must provide four and be satisfied with three elementary and three popular. In other subjects the provision of the more expensive work, so long as we are quite sure of the demand for it, should come first.

If we are *not* sure of the demand, however, observance of this rule may prove unwise. So long as the demand for the advanced or expensive work *does* exist we have good grounds for *reasonable* attention to its calls—though we must never carry this practice to extremes—but if we are doubtful we should remember that advanced demand is often less generally found than elementary and popular demand and (unless we *know* that the advanced works will be used, let it be repeated) the chances are that ultimately the last two will predominate.

(c) The volumes of the different varieties of demand may, however, be very disproportionate. There may be only 10 per cent. demand for advanced works, 60 per cent. for elementary and 30 per cent. for popular. Should only one work be useless to the advanced student, would we be justified in extending the provision, for the benefit of 10 per cent. and to the detriment of 90 per cent. of our readers? It depends upon the seriousness of this detriment on the one hand and the advantage to the 10 per cent. on the other.

(d) The different varieties may, however, be still more disproportionate, say only 5 per cent. for

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advanced, and 5 per cent. for elementary, and 90 per cent. for popular works. Here it may be wiser to ignore any but the popular demand until such time as the provision can be increased.

This leads us to the small subject when representation is so small that it *cannot* be split up for the benefit of the different varieties, when it may even consist of a single book. Our practice here will depend upon the possibilities of compromise. If there is a genuine "general" book, not so technical as to be intelligible only to the expert, not so elementary or popular as not to embrace reasonably full and comprehensive information, there should be no hesitation in providing it. Where no such work is obtainable, we can only give preference to the largest variety, saving that here we must think of future and possible as well as present and actual demand. Therefore we prefer to secure as solid and informative a volume as possible, since the vague popular interest will generally develop into something more of a desire for information, and the *extent* of the information required will widen. If we have to provide, for example, a single book on a subject for which there is a predominating demand for elementary popular information, let us remember that this will surely, sooner or later, be accompanied by a desire for deeper knowledge. We would probably waste our money if we purchased an advanced book at first—but let us endeavour, here also, to compromise and provide for developing interest as much as possible.

The *order of representation* is the concern of most libraries at one time or another. As a rule we have so much to spend on books each month and each year, and into this financial scheme we must fit our new provisions. We cannot buy everything we require at once ;

some demands must have preference, in regard to date, over others. Which shall they be? This is a matter of practical economics, on which it is undesirable to dogmatise.

At first it would seem indisputable that the most important demands should be met first, and such, in general, is wise. But there are exceptions to every rule. In addition to the factor of importance there is the relative urgency of demands. As a rule there is little difference in the time factor; in exceptional cases it may be all important. There are some subjects upon which books must be provided immediately or not at all, and such cases must have time preference over much more important but less urgent demands. At the same time care should be taken that the representation of urgent subjects does not *prevent* the representation of the more valuable, but that it only *delays* it, and, further, that any loss due to the delay is not greater than the gain resulting from the preference given to the more urgent demand.

Urgency may arise from intrinsic or extrinsic causes, that is to say, there may be reasons directly connected with the subject itself, or outside conditions leading to a particular degree of demand. For example, an epidemic of scarlet fever would be an intrinsic cause for urgency; a University Extension course on anything (which was not already sufficiently represented) an extrinsic one. We have no practical need to distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic causes; they are both equally important to us. Nevertheless we must be able to recognise them or we would fail to appreciate the urgency.

If an urgent demand is of the same value as a non-urgent one it must be preferred, as must be the case,

needless to say, if it is of greater value. If the urgent demand is, on the other hand, of less value than the non-urgent one, whether it should be given time precedence will depend upon (a) the difference in value and (b) the degree of urgency. Of this there is no need to speak in detail. Every case must be considered on its own merits, as in the following example :

(a) The broad bean crop in the district is afflicted with blight and there are books (to be obtained) giving such information to the gardener as will enable him to clear the crop of it. It is a rare form of blight, of very irregular occurrence. Now, if the library is going to help the gardener in this matter at all, it must do so immediately. Delay will mean the loss of the crops ; next year there might be no blight. Only a very important alternative provision should be made before this, since, after all, the alternative is only being postponed for a short time.

(b) It is certainly a matter of urgent importance that the cancer plague should be routed by improved dieting and the like, but the degree of urgency is not sufficient to justify this subject being preferred to others of greater value. If we can help the cancer sufferer to-day so much the better ; if not, we can still help him next month, next year—possibly fifty years hence.

VI

DEMAND AND SUPPLY

IN the foregoing pages we have looked upon demand as something separate from the supply of books, as indeed it is. We have sought to discover upon what subjects people require information and to what extent and in what proportion we should provide it. When, as our next step, we wish to put our plans into operation we are obliged, however, to turn our attention to the available *supply* of literature from which we must select that which we require. Is this supply adequate and proportionate?

At first sight it would appear that, since perhaps 90 per cent. of books are published in the belief that there is sufficient demand for them at least to pay their way, the mass and proportion of literature would be closely related to demand. And so it is—but chiefly only to the volume of demand. As most publishing is a commercial venture, the success of which depends upon the number of *copies* sold, the *value* factor has relatively little influence upon the output of the press. We librarians, however, consider the two factors as of equal importance and so it is only natural that the proportions of library stock and of published books should be different.

So far as the small library, and in a general way the larger one, is concerned this is not a matter of significance. The library purchases such a small percentage

of the output of books that even the least well "published" subject is, as a rule, given sufficient attention for our requirements. It is only when the library makes special and unusual or extensive calls for books that the supply is found insufficient.

Now, it must be realised that this section is doomed to be the least fruitful of any in this book, since the supply of books is a matter over which we have very little control. As a general rule we have no alternative but to make the best of it we can. There are, however, a few ways by which we can (a) either improve our opportunities for taking advantage of existing supply, or (b) improve it to meet our requirements.

In the first place our knowledge of the supply must be as full and comprehensive as possible. In the ordinary way this is gained by studying reviews, bibliographies, catalogues and such like aids, but it will be quite clear to all of us that the more *general* the book, the greater the *volume* of demand for it, the more will it predominate in all these guides (excepting the special bibliography) and the more will it overshadow or crowd out the special and limited publication. It is just these with which, in the present connection, we would keep in touch. For information concerning these it is obvious that we may have to examine obscure publications, the announcements of local or semi-private and private publishers (such as certain societies), and, in view of the range of our interests, it is difficult for us to undertake this work. The "English Catalogue," excellent though it is, does not list anything like all the books published; "Whitaker's Reference Catalogue" includes only the standard commercial publishing houses; even the "Times Literary Supplement" is very far from being all comprehensive.

It stands to reason that just those books which are omitted may be required by the librarian who is trying to meet a special demand or to make comprehensive and detailed provision. A glance at the review pages of a specialised technical or scientific journal, for instance, will show the large number of valuable items, limited in their appeal, maybe, which never come before the public and the librarian in the ordinary way.

At present if we require one of these books or information such as will only be found in them we have perforce to hunt through these journals, etc. (and even they are not complete). If our time will not permit us to undertake this or to follow it up until we are successful the matter must be dropped, and, to that extent, the value of our stock will suffer. Could not something be done, either as a commercial proposition or by co-operation (preferably the former), to save all this waste of time? What is needed is a complete classified and annotated list of all books not in the "Times Literary Supplement"—since this may be taken as a good basis. Though quite the majority of these books are not of any particular importance, the value and wide appeal of some is sufficient to justify the experiment.

Sectional bibliographies, particularly those dealing with current topics and recent publications, will also assist in this matter and should be encouraged.

There is another unsatisfactory feature of most bibliographical aids (by which we mean material dealing with actual individual books, and include not only bibliographies but reviews and other critical and explanatory matter). It must be confessed that they are neither as thorough nor as well adapted to our

needs as we should desire. When we realise that the librarian seeks in reviews, for example, information which may not be required by the general public we can scarcely expect any great improvement in their utility as aids to book selection.

In the following sections we shall perceive exactly what information we require and, though we have no claim for special attention from the periodical press, those who compile bibliographies, lists of best books and the like, specially for the use of librarians, should be asked to give us that information. Much of the work which has been done fails in part because the compilers are not sufficiently interested in such matters as, say, the exact class of reader for which a book is intended, the degree of technical knowledge which it assumes, and other factors which determine, not the actual worth of the book as a book, but its particular value to a particular library. We are not really so keen to know the "best" books as to find the most suitable and most serviceable. The book is, for us, an implement for satisfying demand—and there *are* purposes for which a blunt knife is best.

Three ways in which the publication of desired works may be secured are :

(1) Publishers might be informed of our requirements, with a view to their arranging for desired books to be written and published. Readers will, of course, know that there is nothing unusual in this, and that, in fact, a considerable percentage of non-fiction writing is "commissioned" and undertaken at the suggestion of the publisher. Therefore if a librarian perceives the need for a particular work and approaches a suitable publisher it is quite possible that, if the proposal is commercially worth while, the gap will be filled for him.

If several libraries happened to seek the same book and if they could find some means of getting in touch with one another, the publisher would naturally be more ready to listen to the suggestion.

(2) If the need for a work is sufficiently general to secure the co-operation of sufficient libraries there is no reason why libraries should not undertake its publication themselves. As a practical proposition there is not much likelihood either of librarians co-operating to this extent or of there not being a publisher willing to issue so generally needed a work, but the method is there should it be needed. Such a proceeding would seem well worth while, however, in the case of old non-copyright or other works which publishers refuse or neglect to issue in suitable library editions, or which have been allowed to go out of print.

(3) By assisting and co-operating with societies and other agencies which are publishing books which though of value are too limited in their appeal to secure publication in the ordinary way.

As librarians whose duty it is to spend a very limited income to the best advantage to a particular community we must distinguish between those works which we ourselves need and those which, though desirable and valuable in themselves, are not required by our particular community. Where there is a demand in the district, even though it be smaller than would justify the expense in the ordinary way, we should certainly bear our share in making the publication possible. On the other hand when the works proposed to be issued are not of use to us we should be very reluctant to neglect other needed provisions in their favour.

Many publishing organisations and societies are only able to carry on with the support of public libraries,

and whenever (shall we say, "if ever") a library has a sufficient income to enable it to subscribe to them without prejudice to more legitimate provisions it should certainly do so. Otherwise, however, we can only ask ourselves first whether *our* readers do or might require the publications.

On the whole, as aforesaid, we will find that most of the books we require *are* available¹ and that all that is necessary is search for them. To help us in this we cannot have too many good bibliographical publications, nor can we afford to neglect any means of making ourselves acquainted with as many and as various books as possible. Of literature—and here we do not mean pure literature but writings on all manner of things, from pigs to princes, earrings to eschatology—no knowledge is useless to the librarian.

¹ So far as the "works" are concerned. Suitable editions are quite a different matter.

VII

THE INDIVIDUAL BOOK

ALTHOUGH we regard the library, as a whole, as an institution designed to meet adequately and proportionately the needs of the public, we should never forget that we work by means of the individual book. The value of the library depends upon the one work which enables it at each particular point to come into contact with demand, or, in other words, to function. The library does not and cannot function as an entity, but only as a collection of active elements. Each individual demand is met by an individual book (or by several books used together), so that—in no uncertain manner—the strength of the whole can be no more than the strength of the parts.

Needless to say, the assembling of books in a library, bringing into juxtaposition related, supplementary and complementary material, will strengthen the value of the individual book. This systematic union of the units of knowledge, whereby they gain in value and utility, is one of the functions of the library. This, however, cannot seriously affect the main argument, that no matter how thoroughly and scientifically the library is builded its quality is the aggregate of the qualities of the single books provided. A good house cannot be constructed of shoddy bricks.

Therefore it is of the utmost importance that we should pay full attention to the quality of each single item of stock, and also to its suitability for our particu-

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lar purpose and in relation to other provisions. All that has preceded this has concerned the need or otherwise of providing certain information, etc. We have made our decision, turned to the available supply of literature and now wish to select from it those books which will supply our needs.

The first point, however, is that the consideration of the relative merits of individual works can only arise when there is more than one book capable of meeting our needs. The need for information overrides all other considerations. If we want a book on, say, a particular type of internal combustion engine, we must have it, even if the best book is a very bad one. An excellent book on something not quite the same is no more use than a wonderful volume on orange-growing would be. If there were only one book, even though it were printed on bad paper, had no index nor illustrations, were issued by a badly biassed firm and otherwise most undesirable, we should still either have to purchase it or leave that particular demand unsatisfied.

Again, where there are two or more books which answer our requirements to a differing extent we must select that one which accords most completely with our needs, apart from other considerations. For example, should we find half the information we require in an excellently written and produced volume and all in another otherwise unsatisfactory work, the latter should have preference, since, primarily we are seeking not to provide good books, but to meet demands, which the latter will enable us to do and the former will not.

When, however, there are two or many books, any of which would answer equally well our definite

requirements, we will evaluate them with a view to choosing the most useful addition to our library, and for this purpose we require certain general principles of book evaluation

These may be grouped into three classes .

- (a) Those concerning the matter of the book
- (b) Those concerning its authorship, and
- (c) Those concerning the physical make-up of the book

It should be remembered that the following does not necessarily apply to works other than those the purpose of which is to convey information. Other works—of æsthetic or spiritual value, such as poetry, fiction, books on certain aspects of religious thought, etc—call for special principles to be noted later. Clearly no one would dream of judging an imaginative blank verse drama by the first principle by which we judge informative books, for it is :

That the information given should be as accurate and reliable as possible

No writer is infallible, few books, if any, are absolutely accurate in every detail—few themes, in fact, admit of such accuracy. But there is a difference between that degree of trustworthiness for which we can reasonably ask and the frequent careless or deliberate inaccuracies to be found in some books. Therefore, if we have reason to believe—on the strength of personal knowledge, reviews, or other information—that a work embodies an unjustifiable percentage of error, we should be very hesitant in purchasing it. If we have no choice, there being no other work meeting the demand, it would seem fair to note in the work whatever reliable information of its inaccuracies, etc , we possessed, since by that means we would minimise

the danger of wrong or misleading information being circulated

When considering the opinions of reviews, however, it is desirable that we should use some discretion. It is very easy for the expert (or the inexperienced, who are often more ready to indulge in this behaviour) to find faults of detail which do not at all seriously affect its value, though a long list of them might well give the impression that the work was valueless. The faults which we consider most heinous are those which expose the lack of any grasp of fundamentals, of thorough knowledge of the theme, or of its recent developments—not the slight lapses of the undoubted authority, nor typographical or other mechanical inaccuracies.

Secondly, with due regard to the scope of the work, *the information should be complete and conveyed with proper balance*. By this we mean that the author should have attempted honestly to fulfil the promises set forth concerning the ground to be covered. Thus, a work which pretends to embrace certain connected aspects of a subject, but instead omits one or more of them, may be very undesirable in that it might lead to the supposition that such aspect is non-existent or unimportant. We should ask for the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Of course the *whole* truth on any subject could be given in no one book, but, just as the witness's oath is designed to eliminate such wilful omission of fact as might destroy the value of *all* the evidence, so we must require that measure of completeness that the scope of the book leads us to expect. This might be summarised by saying that books should be as complete and thorough as the scope and nature of the work leads us to expect.

The ill-balanced work, when particular aspects or details are dealt with out of proportion to other parts of the author's theme, is not without its serious disadvantage.

Needless to say, when we are particularly in need of the information which is given in an incomplete work, or which the author elaborates disproportionately, that particular work might well answer our purposes admirably. The forgoing only applies when we desire information on the whole field of the work.

(3) So far as is possible *fact should be distinguished from opinion*, and unless we specially desire to represent opinion we should prefer the work which concerns itself with facts. For example, should we require a book on cancer, a general work dealing with the pathology and etiology of the disease, with a disinterested summary and discussion of the various theories as to its nature and cure, will alone prove satisfactory; the works of advocates of particular theories would not answer the general demand, though they may be valuable supplementary purchases. Similarly, on such a matter as the Referendum, a general account of the proposals, giving a history of its operation in various countries and for different purposes, and a review of its supposed advantages and disadvantages should be bought first. Works advocating the Referendum, and those taking the opposite side, should only be provided later.

The deliberate presentation of opinion as though it were fact is another matter akin to the wilful distortion and misrepresentation of the truth. Unless such books are required as representing one side of a controversy or for such other reasons, the librarian is well advised to avoid them. If it is impossible to do with-

out them without prejudicing representation, there is a strong case for informing the reader of the bias of the work (so far as it is possible to do so with the authority of outside evidence such as reviews, etc.,—naturally the librarian hesitates to express his *personal* opinion about books of this character). For example, if a writer sought to prove that the Alsatians desired German (or French) rule and the librarian knew of, say, two independent reviews saying that the case was “proved” by “doctoring” statistics, the librarian would do no harm and might do considerable good if he inserted copies of these reviews at the beginning of the book, thus warning the reader of the author’s bias. The same object may be attained by providing another book challenging the first author’s statements, when the reader of one would be referred, by a note, to the other.

It must be remembered, however, that the reader of two sides of a controversy need be no nearer to the truth than if he read only one. If Jones tries to prove that green is blue and Smith that it is orange, the two writers might cancel one another yet still leave the real nature of the colour unproved. We are always being told “to read both sides of a question”—whereas we would be better advised to leave *both* sides alone and seek to get the basic facts and common ground. As librarians, therefore, we should seek to enable our readers to approach all controversial questions from this direction by providing first and foremost the general, disinterested book.

(4) The *date of the information* is a factor of *importance*, greater in some subjects than others, but always to be considered.

If we are buying a book in order to provide recently

acquired knowledge the date is, naturally, all important. Even if the "up-to-date" book is not so good as an earlier one we must obtain it, since it is only the new information, which is lacking in the earlier and better book, that we require.

If, on the other hand, it is not the new information that we require, we must try to arrive at an average of values, in this way :

What proportion of the new information is lacking in the older book ?

What proportion of the older information is lacking in the new one ?

What are the other advantages of the one book as compared with the other ?

If the older book contains a greater amount of the information (old and new) that we require than the new one does, unless the new information is more important or modifies or supersedes the old, we should prefer the old if otherwise it is a better work.

If, however, the new information is all important we must not buy the old work.

Again, if the new work contains as much information as the old but is so inferior in other respects that the older work is likely to prove more valuable, we should again prefer the old one.

Up-to-dateness can become a fetish. We can exaggerate the importance of the new facts. Though in many subjects their significance is great, in others the date of a work may be comparatively unimportant.

Each subject must be considered carefully on its own merits. We should, of course, endeavour to keep our libraries as well abreast of the times as possible, but it will not pay to do this at the expense of the general body of knowledge. We must remember that

the reader who requires the latest information has at one time needed that general knowledge of his subject which he is now supplementing. In most subjects the new information is the last rung of the ladder to be climbed by the student and inventor. Unless we wish to collect inaccessible top rungs we must take care to provide the bottom parts of the ladders too.

Discrimination must guide us in this matter. Our libraries should neither be entirely post-war nor entirely pre-war, since we need to represent proportionately the valuable of all times.

(5) *The book selected must be that which, by reason of its style, nature, and comprehensiveness, is most suitable for our particular purposes.* The "variety of demand" has been dealt with in a previous chapter, and all that needs be stressed now is that the book selected should answer the particular "variety" of demand to meet which it is being provided. If we desire a popular work on a branch of science and may choose between (a) a really good book which is semi-technical, that is to say, written for the student but sufficiently readable to appeal to a few, but not the majority of our general readers, and (b) a not so good, though satisfactory, genuinely popular work, the latter should be chosen, as it will answer more fully the "variety" of demand for which it is intended.

It may be possible, when we wish to satisfy *two* varieties of demand, to compromise by the purchase of such books, but we should be careful lest we fall between two stools and satisfy neither variety adequately.

(6) When the subject is such that its practice differs in various countries *we should provide books dealing*

with the methods usually followed in our own country, unless, of course, we wish specifically to represent foreign procedure. Those books on social and legal questions, and, to less extent, engineering, manufactures, and other similar matters which are written from the English standpoint, are obviously of great utility to English readers, American works to the American public, etc.

Like most rules, however, this must be applied judiciously. When the foreign work is definitely better and the differences in practice only slight, prefer the better work—e g on some branches of engineering there are valuable American publications for which there are no English equivalents. These should certainly be purchased. Furthermore, especially when selecting supplementary stock, the comparative value of foreign works is great. If we wish for any reason to supply two works of the same type and on the same subject there is a strong case for the foreign work (only, as a rule, the American or Colonial, because of the language question), since thereby we are helping to disseminate the knowledge and experience of others, with undoubted possibilities of benefit to our readers.

The danger which we would avoid is that of representing inadequately the English (or national) point of view and practice. As so many American publications are very well produced, thorough (if sometimes uninspired or "over inspired") and of a wider range of interest than our own, there is always a danger of forgetting that on some matters we must first of all have our own literature. For example, an American history of trades unionism will naturally deal more fully with the progress of the movement in the United States and less thoroughly with English unions. So,

unless we are seeking a history of trades unionism in America we should prefer an English book, and so on.

The *authorship* of a book is often an indication of its value—but not always. Even Homer may not and the worst writer may write one masterpiece. Therefore the reputation of the writer is not an invariable criterion of the worth of a particular book. It is a factor to be considered but not an invariable guide. So far as is possible, therefore, the book itself is that which we should judge—the personality and qualifications of the author being considered only as evidence confirming a decision, or settling a doubt, or to which we have recourse when examination of the book is impossible or impracticable, or when we have insufficient knowledge or evidence to make our decision otherwise. Professor Bigwig might write a very poor, stodgy unreadable, biassed and out of date work on a subject that Mr. Nobody might expound admirably. We should be unjust to the latter and to our public if we preferred the former book on the strength of the Professor's reputation, which may have been gained by quite different work, or which may, in fact, be spurious.

The fact remains, however, that those exceptions, noted above, when the authorship of a book must guide us in selection are of constant occurrence; the working day of the librarian is so full that he cannot give every book his personal attention, and the opinions of the reviewer are not always sufficient or all embracing. So, though, as before stated, most books should undoubtedly be judged as though they were anonymous, in practice we must accept the general laws of probability—that a man who has written one (or more) good books will not write a bad one, that an authority, if perhaps conservative, will at least be honest and

thorough, that once a fool is always a fool, and so on. Therefore the more we know of an author's past work and writings the safer will be our decisions concerning any new book he may issue. Only let us beware of too great a predilection for the "authority." Even these people must begin sometimes—and quite often they never better the work with which they gained their reputation. The best books often come from unlikely or unknown writers.

There are, nevertheless, certain questions which we may ask of any author.

(1) Is he writing with special knowledge, as a result of personal research—in short, offering an *original* work—or is his book merely a compilation of facts which are already available in other publications?

For instance, if it be a book on a branch of science, does it record the results of the author's experiments (or of those of others of which he has new information), or does it summarise or bring together the published records of various experiments with which he may or may not have had any personal connection; if it be a history has the author himself gone to the documents and other sources, or used only printed historical works, and so on.

Now it by no means follows that the first-hand work is preferable to the compilation. There is a tendency to assume that this is so, which apart from the question of the library's need may not be justified altogether. It is argued that the first-hand work is more likely to be correct, since naturally at each step from the source there are opportunities for the introduction of error, but it should also be remembered that the comparison and evaluation of original work and research which may (though it may not) be performed by the com-

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reading and, generally, broaden and illuminate the outlook of the man in the street.

The nature of the qualifications which we should require from an author depends upon the subject and the type of the book. It will be obvious that knowledge of a *subject* may be of different kinds, according to the interests and standpoints of the people concerned. For example, a professor of economics, a traveller, and a Hungarian peasant could all be concerned with the same subject, "agricultural conditions in Hungary," and though each would have knowledge which the other did not have, though each could write or speak with authority, it is often a *preferred* quality of the *actual* monographs. Naturally, however, the compiler of a serviceable and reliable work must have as great and probably a greater general grasp of his subject than the actual investigator whose work he must be qualified to judge.

The most important point is, however, that in most matters the library requires the compilation and does *not* want the specialist's work. On the majority of subjects the library can only provide "general" works and these again will be to a different degree technical—advanced, moderately advanced, elementary—theoretical, or popular. Whatever the nature of the book, nevertheless, we must ask for a competent compiler, definitely and indubitably qualified by knowledge of his subject. Because a book is frankly popular it does not follow that limited knowledge on the part of the writer will suffice to produce an adequate work. Yet it is just the popular general book that is so often written by an incompetent writer, since it seems—and, in fact, if we are not too critical, *is*—so easy to write. Any reasonably intelligent man, with a fair

For example, though (as a general assumption) a Fascist would be best qualified to write an intimate account of the Fascist Movement in Italy, his personal position would preclude him from writing a general account of the ethical basis of the Fascist idea. This could only come from an "outsider." Similarly a farmer is less likely to appreciate the place of agriculture in national industrial welfare than an economist who has, maybe, never even seen a plough.

PHYSICAL CHARACTER OF THE BOOK.

The selector, having judged the matter and the These two qualities are not ~~one~~ ^{two} factor he will con- points arise out of this.

(a) A satisfactory compilation which is well written, readable, and of appeal to the class of reader for whom it is intended is much to be preferred to an original or "authoritative" work by one who has not mastered the art of suiting his manner to his public and which therefore will not be read or understood as the other would be.

(b) An able "generaliser" who can frequently more than compensate for any lack of personal knowledge by his ability to bring a subject into its true relations with knowledge in general is a very valuable man whom we cannot afford to neglect. We may not depend upon his writings for the actual body of knowledge to be given in the library, but such a man can arouse interest, initiate fruitful lines of thought and

¹ There are exceptions to every rule. Some very excellent books have been written to order by those who, until the actual work, had no knowledge of or interest in the subject with which they deal. If the author could name one or two publications known to him as being so written he doubts whether his statement would be credited, so admirable and "authoritative" are the books.

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our readers have physical characteristics also, and with many these embrace bad eyesight. From a point of view of service alone this is important since if a reader cannot read a book without serious inconvenience for him that book scarcely exists.

The value of illustrations depends upon the nature of the book. Often they form an intrinsic part of the matter and must then be adequate.

An index is in informative books a necessity, especially in books of reference value.

Of the value of bibliographies, too, there can be no question. The "select" bibliography and the "direction list" is, however, very different. Their viewpoints would be quite different. Strictly speaking, in fact, they would *not* deal with the same subject, though they would seem to do so. Therefore we should be sure that the writer's qualifications are applicable not only to the general subject but to the particular aspect of it. To give a further example—it is not sufficient to say that A is an authority on the violin, since he may, in actuality, be only an authority on its history, or on the construction of violins, or on violin playing, etc., etc., and there is no reason necessarily to assume that an expert in one branch has any special qualifications to write on another, though quite possibly he may have. Such assumptions are quite frequently made, nevertheless.

If we designate the foregoing as the "inclusive" aspect of qualifications, there is also the "exclusive" aspect, by which we mean that special knowledge of one branch of a subject may even be a positive objection to his work on other aspects. This applies only to certain matters where the special viewpoint is likely to lead to bias, prejudice or lack of proportion.

VIII

REMARKS ON SELECTION IN SPECIAL SUBJECTS

It will be seen that the following chapter deals only with a few of the many groups of subjects calling for special treatment. It is intended only to illustrate manner of a book there is yet touched, and how far we consider—its physical character. By this we mean purely mechanical questions of make up, print, paper, binding, illustrations, etc. These factors can appreciably add to or detract from the value of a work, and given two or more publications of equal merit, so far as the information contained in them is concerned, they will decide which is to be purchased and which avoided. At the outset, however, let it be stated that the contents of a book are the prime consideration. A badly produced but well written book is always to be preferred to a well produced badly written one. The physical character of the publication must be the last thing to be considered, our first need being to provide the information, etc., required.

Since the physical make-up of a book is more part of bibliography than book selection it is unnecessary to be detailed. Four points may be mentioned: type, illustrations, the index, and bibliographies.

The type should be clear, well spaced, even more important, well leaded and sufficiently large. This concerns us particularly since we must remember that

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our readers have physical characteristics also, and with many these embrace bad eyesight. From a point of view of service alone this is important since if a reader cannot read a book without serious inconvenience for him that book scarcely exists.

The value of illustrations depends upon the nature of the book. Often they form an intrinsic part of the matter and must then be adequate.

An index is in informative books a necessity, especially in books of reference value.

Of the value of bibliographies, too, there can be no question. The "select" bibliography or the "reading list" is, however, generally of more utility than the "full" bibliography, saving to a minority of students.

Let it be repeated, however, that physical characteristics are of secondary importance in book selection. We are apt to confuse practical library economics with book selection, to think too much of whether a book will stand a certain amount of wear, whether it will rebind, etc., etc. Of course we must not neglect these matters, but they do not belong to the province of book selection. *There* service is the first and last aim, and the clumsily cased, unbindable volume may give better service than many a calf encased monument of the binder's skill.

VIII

REMARKS ON SELECTION IN SPECIAL SUBJECTS

It will be seen that the following chapter deals only with a few of the many groups of subjects calling for special treatment. It is intended only to illustrate how these groups may be approached, and how far we need to give them unusual consideration, and to amplify to some extent our previous argument, since we are here able to deal more appropriately with matters of general significance.

THE FINE AND LITERARY ARTS.

Not so long ago, in the course of a general discussion, between friends, of political difficulties, it was remarked, very wisely, that an immense number of our difficulties, misfortunes and contentions are solely due to loose thinking, to the careless application of terms, and an inability, or lack of desire, to see things "whole." In few fields of human activity is this more noticeable (though, of course, it is not pretended that the results are of such importance as in other matters such as economic problems) as in the criticism and evaluation of all branches of literature and the arts. If we librarians wish to view our problems thoroughly and dispassionately it is our duty to recognise and avoid this loose thinking wherever possible, since it must affect the real and ultimate value of our work. It

cannot be asserted that such discussion is outside our province—have we not said before that above all the librarian must be a judge of judges, a critic of critics ?

The outstanding example, and one from which a host of misunderstandings and “ differences of opinion ” arises, is the omission to realise that all works of art (including literary compositions) can and must be judged according to two standards—absolute and historical. In other words, if we take an artist’s work, we can judge it as *art* pure and simple in relation only to current standards of art and irrespective of any other consideration (this being “ absolute ” valuation) or we can judge it in relation to the development of that particular branch of art, taking into consideration such matters as the limitations of period, environment, technical knowledge, etc., under which the artist laboured. When we are judging the man we must give these latter factors first consideration. The artist who, with scarcely any materials to help him, with no school or tradition to guide him, and the opposition and lack of appreciative understanding of his contemporaries to hinder him, yet produces work decidedly superior to that of his age must undoubtedly be considered a greater man than one who produces equally good work at a later date, when he can benefit by the experience of his predecessors. But there can be no doubt that the artistic value of his work is not necessarily so great as that of the average work of a later generation. Any competent art student at, say, the Slade or Heatherly’s, could, if he wished, paint pictures as good as those of Giotto, but that does not in the least detract from Giotto’s greatness. If we consider Giotto’s work by historical standards we must admit it to be great ; if we judge it by absolute

artistic standards, it must be accounted rudimentary and of second or third rate value. These two opinions, one of Giotto and the other of Giotto's work, are equally sound, and in no way incompatible. Far from it, in all the subjects of literary and artistic criticism there not only *can* but *must* be two such distinct judgments, each with its distinct basis of criticism. The fact that the greatest men have produced work which, notwithstanding their historical limitations, is in the first rank, when judged by absolute standards, does not affect the argument, and only tends to emphasise their greatness. When, however, we are considering men who are not of this surpassing genius, the point is one of distinct importance. Lack of distinction between historical and absolute valuations is responsible for evils double-edged in their power to wound. Whenever a professor or a critic, without stating his standpoint, hails as a great man one whose work we cannot recognise as great by present-day standards, our faith in his judgment is shaken, and we are prejudiced against both the man and his work. If the critic had made his attitude clear, telling clearly that, though he himself recognised that the man's *work* was not great, the *man* and his *endeavour* were, we would be fair and sympathetic towards it. Yet instances of this confusion are of daily occurrence.

As librarians, however, we are not so much concerned with the morasses into which the well-meaning critic may wander as with the fact that since these subjects can be judged in two distinct ways, they are also to be approached in two ways. In short, there will be two kinds of demand for them—the historical and the absolute. Very probably the bulk of these demands will come from the same people—he who is interested

in the purely artistic merit of painting cannot be devoid of curiosity as to the history of that art—but for purposes of representation the distinction has value.

In the first place we will otherwise have a tendency to overestimate the historical side. Particularly in literature¹ the greater part of systematic study follows historical lines, æsthetic and artistic considerations and the basis of appreciation taking a very secondary place. Instruction in literary judgment and appreciation is, of course, a very difficult matter, and the historical method is simplicity itself (for the instructor, at any rate), but though that is an explanation it is not an excuse. We would not minimise the importance of historical knowledge as an aid to the real appreciation of literature or art, but when it is elevated to the position of an end in itself it becomes a positive danger, since the only purpose of such study can be artistic, and not academic. Though their taste *might* not be so good, those who have not enjoyed the doubtful advantage of a systematic "course" of literature are more likely to pursue it for its own sake as an art and as a path to intellectual development and pleasure. We therefore assert as a definite principal that, though the work of historical interest should not be passed over, the greater the absolute value of a work (independent of all historical considerations) the stronger its claims to representation in a library (subject, of course, to previously stated principles concerning the volume of demand, etc.).

¹ In art the historical side has not been given such emphasis for the simple reason that most organised instruction in art is practical, and to the practitioner of an art absolute artistic values are clearly more important and obvious than historical considerations.

This contention attacks that old text book fallacy that "all works mentioned in the standard histories of literature should find a place in every library"—in every reasonably large library, *certainly*—since they would only represent a just portion of a big stock of literary works—but in a small library, *certainly not*. If the standard literary history listed 500 works and the whole English literature section comprised only, say, 600 volumes, it would be quite wrong to fill the section with works many of which are only of historical interest. A part of the 500 would, of course, be works of absolute value—a large part, maybe, but not so high a proportion as some would pretend. Of works published before Shakespeare's time it is doubtful whether ten would, on a basis of absolute literary value, deserve inclusion in a stock of 500, but the standard history mentions a good many more than this.

The argument that they should all be included, "as the student of the history of literature would need them and expect to find them in the library," is based upon a wrong idea of the function of the library, which should serve not the student only, but the whole community. So long as modern works of a certain literary merit are unrepresented the small library can have no place for works of less merit and less present-day appeal, even though they were by men whom, for historical considerations, we would rank as much greater than the modern authors.

Secondly, apart from the question of their relative importance, it should be realised that there always does exist this double demand. A subject is not properly represented unless both the historical and the absolute demands are proportionately satisfied. This applies equally to most subjects apart from

literature and art, and is only another way of saying that the history of any topic is an essential part of that topic and full representation will include it. There may be, however, cases where this warning is necessary—for example, a history of painting must be accompanied by works giving examples of pictures, not necessarily only such as will amplify the history, but such as will meet the requirements of those concerned only with artistic values (see later) and vice versa.

Another source of critical confusion is neglect to dissociate, from the works of certain artists, interests and values which are neither artistic nor concerned with the history of art. Upon these ulterior matters the total merit or value of the artist's work may depend, and attempts to lump together all these factors in a judgment of the art or the artist will once more serve to discredit the critic and confuse the ordinary man. For example, in the work of a religious poet the religious element might be of prime significance and the poetic element of slight interest. The result of this fusion of factors might be great religious poetry and very poor verse. Similarly, Blake is a mystic of considerable importance, but a very mediocre, badly-equipped painter.

In such instances the art is merely the medium used by the writer or the artist; their work is not of considerable value to the student or appreciator of poetry and painting, but to the religious or mystic mind. Wherever such an ulterior or extra-artistic element is of the greater importance we should realise that when providing these works we are answering not artistic but religious demands (or whatever else it may be).

THE FINE ARTS.

Books on many branches of the fine art can be divided roughly into two classes—explanatory and expository.¹ By “explanatory” works we mean all books *about* the art—history, criticism, biography, practical and instructional works, etc ; by “expository” we mean those which give actual examples of the art. The majority of art books belong, of course, to both categories, since the history or biography is usually illustrated with “expository” material, i.e. illustrations. Many, however, do *not* belong to both categories (e.g. the original editions of Ruskin’s “Modern Painters” were unillustrated), in others one purpose predominates, or is more or less adequately dealt with (e.g. most of the Studio numbers are predominantly expository ; most explanatory works published before the adoption of modern photo blocks, and many issued since, are quite useless as “expositions” of art, and so on).

What we need to remember is that (with the exception to be noted shortly) both explanatory and expository works should be provided and that, naturally, we can do with more exposition than explanation.² The person who is interested in, say, Rembrandt, will be better served by a number of good reproductions of his works than by an unillustrated (or badly illustrated) book about that artist. He will, of course,

¹ A similar subdivision will apply to all matters where the subject itself can be presented in book form—e.g. poetry. Other subjects do not admit of this subdivision—e.g. all books on engineering or political economy must be explanatory (in the sense in which the term is now used).

² As another instance of this, nothing looks more foolish than to see in a library critical works devoted to an author whose actual writings are missing.

be best served by both, and therefore to give both should be our aim. This statement is based upon the assumption, which will be true in 999 cases out of 1,000, that unless the library can give the reader the means to acquaint himself with an artist's work he must remain ignorant of it. Therefore the exception is when there is another good expository agency available, such as, for example, an art gallery specialising in a particular school or with an unusually representative selection of an artist's works. In such a case the demand would be greater for books "explanatory" of the contents of this gallery. Such cases are very exceptional.

As a very general rule, then, we need plenty of good illustrations above all else in our art sections. Well illustrated explanatory books are to be preferred, but when the best of these histories and critical writings etc., are *not* well illustrated they require supplementing by separate expository works. For purposes of exposition illustrations, let it be repeated, must be good. It may be impossible to find at all or to provide out of a limited income altogether satisfactory illustrations of all desired artists, but we should look for the following desiderata :

(1) Illustrations should be sufficiently large to exhibit detail and to give some idea of the artist's technical methods. Nothing smaller than the full page of a crown 8vo book is of much use, and this is quite the minimum. As, however, folio works are, by reason of their size and weight, of limited utility, the general public will be best served by the various quarto sizes.

(2) They should give a true reproduction of the original. For this reason photogravures, collotypes, and even process blocks and other photoprints are to

be preferred to line drawings, engravings,¹ etc., since there is inevitably some departure from the original line when the hand of another comes between the original and the illustration. For this reason accurate colour reproductions are preferable to black and white illustrations, since a *good* colour print will more closely approach the original of a painting. But *bad* colour prints are further from it than the black and white ones. They are, in fact, an injustice to the artist. With a black and white illustration the student sees that there is no attempt to suggest colouring, whereas with a bad colour block he may imagine that the artist was really guilty of such atrocities. The three-colour block system *can* give satisfactory results but the slightest variation in the inking will absolutely ruin the colour values² and so care must be exercised in the selection of books so illustrated. Foolish attempts to give a canvas texture to a print and such-like devices favoured by some popular publishers in no way add to and may detract considerably from the value of a reproduction.

(c) The illustrations of a particular school or by an individual artist should be as representative of the artist's best work as possible, and it is very desirable that the various phases of an artist's work should find a place. This is, of course, not a matter over which the librarian has a great deal of control; it is largely the affair of the publisher. The remark is principally intended to remind librarians that, other things being

¹ Engravings will be provided, needless to say, as examples of that art.

² An example of this will be found in some of Black's colour books, where the beautiful illustrations of the earlier editions are, in the later issues, spoiled by the use of the wrong inks.

equal, the special monograph is to be avoided until he possesses a general work. For example, the volume of Botticelli's Dante illustrations should certainly not be purchased before a good general book.

This effects the small library more than the larger one, where as a rule there is room for a large part of the suitable reproductions of all the more notable artists. A certain amount of duplication is unavoidable, though it must be borne in mind that two volumes with 24 plates in each (for example) of which 12 are duplicate reproductions only amounts to 36 in all, not 48. This, like much else in these pages, may seem obvious, but we have known "additional" art books that only add in reality two or three examples, and unless the purchase is justified by the text alone it is clearly uncalled for (unless it is a case of deliberate duplication to cope with a large volume of demand—which is really not often the case where art books are concerned. Good art is always of appeal; the reader can afford to wait a little while as a rule, if thereby the *range* of the provision is widened).

Sculpture has often been considerably *under-represented* by libraries. The appeal of this art may not be so great in this country as in, say, Italy,¹ but it is increasing and cannot be neglected. We fear, however, that this neglect is not seldom due to the fact that the finest and most universally popular subject by which the sculptor is attracted is the human figure. Though we are not necessarily puritanical we have our responsibilities and know that unfortunately there are

¹ Due essentially, perhaps, to climatic conditions. Sculpture has always been developed and appreciated more in hot, sunny lands (e.g. ancient Greece), undoubtedly because the effect of strong light and shadow enhances the significance of all plastic art.

many evil-minded people in the world and dormant potentialities for nastiness in some of the most respectable of us. So we have wondered whether it was "quite *safe*" to fill our shelves with pictures of naked men and women. Well, the only answer to this objection is that it is, in the first place, the librarian's duty to take such precautions as he may think will prevent the abuse of these books, and in the second that he is not justified in hiding the beauties of the artist's creation or of the works of nature from those who will be made happier by acquaintance with them.

Black and white photographic reproductions of sculpture are the only satisfactory ones. Publishers should note that our appreciation and understanding of many works would be aided by photographs from two or even more directions. A statue may be viewed from any angle—a point constantly appreciated by the sculptor—and so a single photograph is a very incomplete representation.

Architecture is a subject of much wider appeal than it may at first appear. In addition to the professional and amateur student, every man who lives in a house or who lives where he must look upon buildings (that is to say all men) should be to some extent interested in the art. Unfortunately they are not. Until very recent years when many have been driven by necessity "to build their own houses," the demand for works on the many aspects of architecture has been very small in proportion to its importance, and the result is that 90 per cent. of our population ¹ live in surroundings of perpetual ugliness. Economic conditions are always more urgent than artistic ideals, but it is still difficult to believe that, had the majority of our people known

¹ Of the urban population, at any rate.

anything of the possibilities of domestic and commercial architecture, or given the matter the slightest thought, things would be quite so bad in this respect as they are. The blight of indifference has affected even ecclesiastical architecture. Not one in a hundred of the red brick churches and tin chapels erected within the last century or so is not an insult to the God in whose honour it was erected. It may have been, to *some* extent, a question of money, though this factor has been exaggerated. In many cases the extra cost would have been only the fees of an architect with sufficient faith and interest in his profession. However that is not our concern at the moment. The point, so far as we are concerned, is that architecture is not quite on the same footing as the other arts. The others are optional in the sense that those who are not interested can ignore them and at the same time will not be brought into much compulsory contact with them. Architecture, on the other hand, is an art of universal utility; it cannot be avoided; its application, good or bad, must affect every one. It follows, therefore, that the more knowledge of it there is and the more interest is taken in it the better, and, therefore, such demand as does exist cannot be disregarded.

DRAMA.

If the following section is more a plea for increased attention to an often neglected branch of library provision than a discussion of theoretical principles the writer would ask your pardon for thrusting such foreign matter into this book.

The printed play is not, in many libraries, given the place which it deserves, either as a branch of literature or as a subject of demand. Owing to prejudice and

ignorance of the suitability of drama as matter for reading, and also to the fact that the number and quality of printed plays has increased too much in recent years for the public as a whole to recognise their worth and so *express* a demand for them, this is a field where an exceptional amount of *unexpressed* demand exists. In other words, though a librarian may not often be *asked* for plays he will find that, if he provides them, a great number of people will read them. Some few librarians, with faith and discernment, have put before their readers adequate collections of the best works of modern dramatists, and they have made a new and gratified public for them.

Perhaps the writer is prejudiced to some extent by personal interest and yet he believes that the printed play has a great future, for several reasons. Chief of them is the way in which, though a man's leisure may be decreasing, the number of the phases of life in which he is interested is increasing. The last generation has found the average man much less self-centred, with a vastly wider horizon and greater range of interests. This is one of the finest and most hopeful signs of the times. Where once one man was interested in matters of human significance (other than circumstance directly touching his own life) there are now thousands. Political, sociological, psychological and religious problems are appealing to more men and women to-day than ever before—not necessarily, nor frequently, finding serious students in them, but men and women desirous of discovering, even and perhaps preferably, by way of their recreational reading, something more of the behaviour and aspirations of their fellows. The novel of to-day, as a proof of this, embraces matters with which few would have

concerned themselves once upon a time. What has this to do with the printed play?—simply, this: Though a man's interests are increasing his leisure might be decreasing, and whereas a good novel might well occupy his reading time for a week or two,¹ for the perusal of the average play two or three hours are sufficient. It is freely admitted that there is a very great deal in the novel which will not be found in the play—we are certainly not suggesting that plays should be read *instead* of novels, but as well. Nevertheless the essence of the drama is conciseness. In the brief traffic of the stage the dramatist must present all that is essential of his people, their actions and his intellectual groundwork. If the play is trivial it will be of no more depth than a trivial novel, but if his intentions are serious he will give the reader, by the very nature of his medium, more information and more stimulation per hour, shall we say, than the novelist will. Therefore the reader whose available time for the better type of fiction—and drama is of course one form of fiction—is limited is well advised to give the printed play full consideration. The same applies to the biographical play. What other week's *light* reading would give a man such a varied and interesting and stimulating series of intellectual experiences as the following—a list of plays noted at random from a list of the writer's own light reading—Martinez Sierra's "Bonds of Interest," Toller's "Masses and Men," Sacha Guitry's "Un Sujet de Roman," Monkhouse's "Conquering Hero," Drinkwater's "Robert E. Lee," Capek's Insect Play, and

¹ Miss Rebecca West, not long ago, suggested that one *should* be prepared, if necessary, to devote two months to a really worth while novel, in order to do it justice.

Barrie's "Dear Brutus." These are not in any way selected titles, as to choose for this example particularly notable works would be unfair, but just typical works of the class which the public library would naturally provide. Even in the domain of really light work designed solely for amusement the argument will serve, for who could provide a better *week's* entertainment than Milne's "Mr. Pym Passes By," Barrie's "Admirable Crichton," Sierra's "Romantic Young Lady," one of Pincro's farces such as "Dandy Dick" or "The Magistrate," Archer's "Green Goddess," Dunsany's "If," and Shaw's "Pygmalion"—another quite haphazard selection.

The selection of suitable plays may prove difficult to those with no special knowledge unless it is realised that the range of pretensions of the drama is as wide or wider than that of the novel. Just as we have the humorous story, the "thriller," the "love" story and the serious novel intended for the intelligent man who is prepared to bring thought to bear upon the work, so we have the light and the heavy fare of the theatre. The significance of this is that the selector should not confine his representation to any one or two types of drama and, that, above all, popularity is no more a criterion of value in a play than it is in a novel. As a matter of fact, excluding acting editions, the majority of printed plays reach a standard which is rather higher than is the case with novels—for a reason to be noticed in a moment—though, at the same time, at present there is, perhaps, an unduly large proportion of "crank" and mediocre though pretentious works. This is due to the fact that, though the chief excuse for the printed play is genuine interest in dramatic art, much of it originates from a desire,

often justifiable but also often not so, to put before the public in *print* work which cannot, for one of several reasons, be given to the public through its proper medium—stage representation. There are many fine works which are either unsuitable for stage production or not of sufficiently wide appeal for their staging to be commercially feasible. But these two reasons do not account for all unproduced work and the natural desire of authors (and publishers) that their works should not be neglected is responsible for the publication of much which is in some way wanting.

Nevertheless, as before said, the bulk of published drama is superior, in intention if not in performance, to the average novel, for this reason. The less the intellectual value of a play the more must its stage success depend upon the other factors of performance—staging, acting, and the like—and therefore the less complete will be the printed presentation. The wise publisher (and, in this matter of giving to the public that which is *suitable*, most publishers are wise, or they would fail) realises this and leaves alone those works which depend largely upon extra essentially-theatrical qualities. So, since as a general rule the less the worth of a play is connected with its trappings the better will be its intellectual content, the majority of those plays which are considered suitable for publication will reach a certain standard, not always sought for in the lower grades of the novel. It is undoubtedly true that all plays lose something when removed from the stage; some excellent plays suffer considerably in their transference from the theatre to the reading room (e.g., those of Sir J. M. Barrie); others gain perhaps as much in one way as they lose in another, when the reader is given the advantage of time to

study their implications, which is denied to the spectator (e.g. those of Shaw). On the other hand, the less substantial—the old French farce, the modern thriller, the play which serves merely as a frame for a matinee idol or a popular actress—lose so much that publishers have more sense than to put them in print, saving for the benefit of amateur actors.

FICTION.

We have, in another section, discussed the need for providing fiction (and other works) of varying degrees of merit. When the demand exists we can only evaluate it and give proportionate "volume-value" representation; we must not ignore it. Therefore, when we are preparing rules to guide us in the selection of fiction we cannot be concerned with "standards of value"; that is to say, we cannot say "that is not so good a book as Conrad; therefore we won't have it." All we can do is to formulate rough standards of competence and desirability that can be applied to any class or grade of fiction, which, in short, will enable us to decide whether a book is "good of its kind." For instance, though we may decide that racing stories are of very slight value we cannot but realise that there are good and bad racing stories, and we will rightly seek to provide the former and ignore the latter, providing they will answer more or less equally the demand.¹

On the other hand there are some novels so bad or so undesirable that we should in no circumstances

¹ This last reservation must not be lost sight of. Exceptional merit, literary or other, might well remove a book from its ordinary genre and field of appeal. One *could* purchase a number of detective stories, for instance, written in such a manner that they would not appeal to the public for whom these works are usually provided.

purchase them—this being, of course, a question of evaluation. A really undesirable book would be given a negative evaluation and no volume of demand could make this positive. What are these books which we must ban? Which should we ban absolutely—which should be purchased for limited circulation, and on what grounds?—and what should be the nature of the limitation in circulation?

Before dealing with these questions the writer will quote, from Miss Bascom's pamphlet on Book Selection, a list of tests for fiction which is suggestive and will form a basis for discussion.

The questions we should ask ourselves concerning any novel are:

"(1) Is the life it pictures true to nature? Or is it sensational? melodramatic? exaggerated? distorted? morbid?

(2) Are the characters alive? Does the psychology of their acts ring true? Are they worth delineating? Do they throw any new light on the workings of the human mind and heart?

(3) Is the plot original? hackneyed? ingenious? probable? involved? simple? Is it successfully worked out? Does it hold the interest?

(4) Does it blur the hard-won line between right and wrong?

(5) If it depicts sin, is the author's attitude moral? immoral? unmoral?

(6) Is its spirit that of good-will towards men? Does it engender a more kindly feeling toward human nature?

(7) Does it leave a sense of completeness and satisfaction? Does it stimulate, inspire, or merely amuse?"

We are not told what answers we should consider as favourable, though in most cases the intentions of the compiler of the questions is obvious. Neither are we given any indication of the relative force of a negative or positive answer to the various questions. But, apart from that, they disclose the difficulty—even the impossibility—of such formulæ, even when only intended as indications (as, of course, these are) and not as rules.

On the whole they are quite sound. Taking them together, the ideal novel would seem to be one which depicts naturally interesting and consistent characters engaged in incidents which are reasonably probable. So far we are in hearty accord—but this does not exhaust the scope of the questions and much of the remainder is debatable ground. For instance, can we require *both* that the characters “should throw new light on the workings of the human mind and heart” and that the life depicted is not morbid? or that the plot is original? or ingenious? or successfully worked out? or that the spirit of the book is one of good-will towards men? or that the work leaves a sense of completeness and satisfaction? The fact is that more often than not the characteristics might be and often are quite incompatible. What we need is an appreciation of the essential difference between different types of fiction and a realisation that qualities which we should seek in one type might be quite out of place in another. A really great book might answer most of the questions, yet we cannot, with fairness and good sense, expect the average book to do so.

In fact, in practice we would subdivide the majority of novels into their types simply because we are able to answer one of several such questions concerning them.

Thus there are :

(1) Novels of which the chief interest is in the setting—the “life” depicted. Such books are those which are concerned with a particular section of society, with a period, with national characteristics, and so on, examples of this type being Sinclair Lewis’s “Main Street,” Bojer’s “Last of the Vikings,” Mitchison’s “The Conquered,” Gaskell’s “Cranford,” Sinclair’s “The Jungle,” and Flaubert’s “Salambo.”

Now clearly we must insist that the life depicted in these novels should be true to nature, but that need not prevent the book from being either sensational, melodramatic, or morbid (though naturally exaggeration and distortion are undesirable), since the life depicted might be so. Really the first question is sufficient without qualification; if the life pictured is true to nature, nothing more need be asked in that connection.

We can also require, as a natural concomitant, that the characterisation shall be true to life, since the characters are part of the setting, but we have no right to expect any particular kind of plot.

(2) Novels of characterisation, books telling the story of men and women with the semblance of life. These books should answer question (2) in all its parts, but again they need not answer (1) or (3). Such are most of Conrad’s, Meredith’s, Hardy’s—in fact, a great part of the masterpieces of fiction naturally belong to this class.

(3) Novels of “plot” interest—mystery and detective stories, romances, and such books where the action is all-important. In such books we are willing to accept impossible or unlikely initial premises and arbitrary developments, which we realise may be

absolutely without truth in relation to characterisation or setting. These novels are certainly preferable when the plot is original and ingenious, and should certainly be successfully worked out and interesting. But probability is not so essential a characteristic, and whether the plot should be simple or involved must depend upon its nature and treatment.

"Plot" novels should leave a sense of completeness, but in "character" and "setting" novels this might be impossible and untrue, though in the sense that our glimpse of life will seem as complete as it can be with regard to the circumstances described, the best novels of all types will answer this question.

To ask whether the book is imbued with a spirit of good-will towards men is rather foolish and beside the point. What is good-will towards men? how is it expressed?—these are difficult questions to answer, saving in a conventional manner. Pessimism, cynicism, scepticism, disgust, hatred, all these serve an end which may be directly opposed to the intention of the writer, or he may deliberately seek to provoke a reaction by the presentation of the undesirable.

Yet it may be asked of books belonging to a fourth group:

(4) Novels of "idea" interest—books in which, for example, the philosophical or moral "idea" is all-important. Such books are many of Wells', notably "The Research Magnificent," Hargreave's "Harbottle," most Utopian novels (Hudson's "Crystal Age," Butler's "Erewhon," etc.); or the "idea" may be a scientific one, as in the early romances of Wells, or Conington's "Nordenholt's Million." The worth of such works depends upon the value of the idea and the purely fictional merits of the writing,

plot construction, etc. Other things being equal the novel of this class is generally particularly "worth while"

These four types cannot, of course, be regarded as mutually exclusive. Books might well claim admission to any two or to all of them; very often it will be difficult to decide to which a particular work belongs. The writer's only object is to show that they do exist and that we cannot judge works of one type by the same criteria as another.

There are two further types, books which may or may not belong equally well to any of the other classes. We refer to "propagandist" and "literary" novels. By the first we mean novels written with an ulterior purpose, the presentation in fictional form of advocacy or criticism of subjects of extra-fictional interest; and by the second those works of which the literary quality is sufficient to satisfy and attract the reader independent or in spite of the subject.

Propagandist novels, which are nearly always of "idea" interest, though the converse is not always true, need careful consideration, since we cannot ignore their special characteristic. We can look upon them either as fiction or as propaganda, and we can make our decision on the score of one or other of these factors. Thus we may purchase such a novel, in spite of its propaganda, if it is a good novel, or if we want propaganda we can decide to buy it in spite of the absence of fictional merits. The point is that we should be clear what we want.

As a general rule the propaganda detracts from the purely fictional value of a work, but there are many exceptions, numerous excellently written novels designed to prove a thesis or help a cause (e.g.

Lacretelle's "Silbermann," Reade's "It's Never Too Late to Mend").

To summarise, in fiction we should aim at securing the best of each type and class, and this we will not effect by the application of hard and fast rules.

Part two of question 7 in the American quotation raises another important point. "Does it stimulate, inspire, or merely amuse?" it asks. The suggestion is, we presume (since there can be no other point in the question), that if a novel "merely amuses" it is not so desirable. This is surely a ridiculous attitude, for two reasons—firstly, only a very small percentage of the writers of novels attempt or desire to stimulate or inspire; secondly, only a very very small percentage of the readers of novels have the slightest wish to be stimulated or inspired. They read novels, as a general rule, simply to be "merely amused," and if a novel can do this it is in nine cases out of ten fulfilling its purpose. It is not denied that all really first-class novels *do* stimulate the reader's understanding, sympathies and imagination, nor that most intelligent men prefer such books to the "merely amusing," saving when they are seeking relaxation and recreation. The main purpose of fiction is, however, recreative. Anyone who argues from this that the library should not, therefore, supply light fiction must be referred to our initial contention that the library should answer, as far as possible and proportionately, all the needs of the community, one of which, and a most important one, is recreation.

Questions (4) and (5) broach a much debated matter—the question of the immoral and undesirable novel. It is one we should approach with an open mind and a sense of proportion. We must not say that every

book which deals with matters one would not discuss in one's drawing room, or which uses words not common to polite society, or which expresses (not necessarily advocates) views not held by the most orthodox and conservative must be rigidly excluded. We need only carry this proceeding to its logical end to realise its absurdity. Yet at the same time we must recognise our responsibilities, and in cases of doubt take such precautions as will keep the doubtful book out of the wrong hands.

For the crux of the question is that undesirability is a relative matter. What is harmful to one reader may be beneficial to another. Furthermore, intentions and effect are two different things. A writer may be imbued with the most righteous desires and so he would be understood by the righteous reader, yet his actual readers might be just those most disposed to ignore and pervert his purpose and gloat over the details connected with the exposition. For example, Dumas *fils* wrote his "La Dame aux Camelias" and Daudet his "Sappho" as a warning. How many dirty minded people read them in the hope that they will prove much nastier than they actually are?

And, yet again, the writer may have his tongue in his cheek, may don the cloak of the moralist to excuse an undesirable but pecuniarily satisfactory literary undertaking. Who can say that a writer is or is not honourable in his intentions?

All things considered we shall be best advised to leave these questions alone and be guided by a much more practical consideration. This is that whenever we consider a book undesirable for general circulation (whenever we have any *doubt* about it) we can only deal with it safely if we restrict its circulation. Now

by restricting its circulation we are also restricting its potentialities (for good and for evil), or in other words paying for a book which will not be issued as often as the average novel. We will be paying dearly for it.

This should be a sufficient *practical* argument in favour of our being very hesitant in buying the doubtful and undesirable.

Novels for restricted circulation should, therefore, only be bought when they are of exceptional literary merit, of particular ethical significance, or otherwise sincere and serious works written by and intended for thinking men. Such works are not many, since it is clear that they are justified only because of their literary or other *extra fictional* value. The shallow novel of no real significance (such as Margueritte's "La Garconne," George's "Ursula Trent," Keable's "Simon Called Peter," and so on) has no claim for representation in a public library.

We do not want to be narrow minded. We must realise that the average intelligent man is very deeply concerned with subjects which would not find a place in polite mixed conversation, but on these themes only the significant and sincere are worthy of consideration.

RELIGION.

Religion is notoriously a dangerous subject on which to write—no matter what one's personal opinions may be they would arouse opposition from *some* other people. It is, curiously enough, a subject where there is little common ground or general concensus of opinion. Nevertheless it must be dealt with here, though we shall be as brief as possible.

Several matters must be considered.

Firstly, religion provides an excellent example of the value of demand representation over subject representation. In no other instance, perhaps, would the latter lead to such a collection of unserviceable books, calculated to draw ridicule upon the librarian, because—consider a point which we are all apt to forget—religion and Christianity are by no means synonymous terms. At least 85 per cent. of the religion schedules of our classification schemes are (rightly considering their purpose) devoted to Christianity; 90 per cent of Englishmen mean “Christianity” when they say “religion.” Yet Christianity is only one of many religious systems, some of which have, in comparison, very considerable numbers of adherents. If we practised “subject” representation we should have to provide perhaps 50 books on Mohammedanism, on Buddhism, and so on to every 100 we supplied on Christianity. The absurdity of this would be obvious. Yet, concerning ourselves only with comparative values and ignoring our own personal beliefs, we could not say that Christianity was more than twice as important *as a subject* than Mohammedanism, or that Taoism was more important than Confucianism. The solution to the difficulty is found in the relation of the volume and value of demand. The volume of the call for works on Christianity is, in European countries, very large and that for non-Christian religions very small—and our provision is proportionate. In an Eastern library, to be used by the natives and not by the European population, the position would probably be reversed.

The next two points are related to this.

Secondly, among Christian nations there is a considerable difference in the number of members of

the various Christian *churches*. For example, in Italy or Spain the Roman Catholic element is strongest, in England the Church of England finds a large majority of adherents. This is obvious enough, but its importance is shown by the next step, which is that in the various *towns* in the same county the percentage differs. There is one town in England (at least) where quite 30 per cent of the churchgoing population are Roman Catholics (possibly the percentage is even greater); in others there are hardly any. Therefore it follows that we should ascertain as accurately as possible the percentages in our own locality. It is a widely differing factor. Moreover, religion minorities are liable to be obscured more than is generally the case, and we, since we wish to provide proportionately for all, must try to discover the real conditions of the religious life of our districts.

Thirdly, we must as librarians maintain an absolute impartiality and so we must not attempt to arrive at any comparison between religions or churches. We must remember that to the Mohammedan "there is only one God and Mohammed is his only prophet." To him all other faiths are but a snare and a delusion. To the Christian also there is only one true faith, and so on. Each believer must necessarily consider his own faith as all important, all wise—the rest as in some way undesirable or deficient. Now, as private persons we will rightly hold to our own opinions, but as public persons we can only look upon religions and churches as institutions of equal importance to the people who respectively maintain them. The volume of demand is here the only determining factor.

BOOKS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES.

Books in foreign languages are required for three purposes :

(a) For foreign residents.

(b) For students, including English-speaking people who read foreign books not definitely to study the language, but with the idea of combining ordinary reading with the extension or maintenance of their knowledge of the language.

(c) When they provide something which cannot be (or, at any rate, is not) given by English books, this "something" being either (1) information, as when there is no English book dealing with a subject to the same extent, or in the same manner, or from the same point of view, or (2) the indefinable *literary* quality, peculiar to a language, and which cannot be conveyed saving through the medium of that language—for example, the best translation of poetry cannot retain the full meaning and atmosphere and very little, if any, of the poetic and musical qualities of the original.

These three purposes must govern the selection of foreign works, though to some extent they will operate together. For instance, books in class (c) are practically useless unless there are foreign or English readers able and desiring to make use of them. This applies, however, more to section 2 of (c) than to section 1, since where the desire for information alone is concerned the knowledge of the language need not always be so great. It is quite likely that a student could, with the aid of a dictionary and assisted by the universality of most scientific and technical names and terms, garner the salient facts from a German text book on industrial nitrogen, even though his acquaintance with

the language were quite insufficient for him to read, or dream of attempting to read, Heine's poetry. Even this argument, however, has little force when languages requiring transliteration are concerned.

For the student we will naturally require simpler works—those written in pure modern idiom, as free from dialect, slang or colloquialism as from old forms of speech. Others, the foreigner and the competent "reader," will be open to consider any good and suitable books, and for this reason we make the suggestion, not so commonly followed as it might be, that, apart from texts for students, we should concentrate upon class (c) books.

As the demand for foreign texts in the average English library will be limited we shall clearly be serving the best interests of the library if we can fulfil at one and the same time all three purposes. This can only be done by preferring those works which cannot be supplied in English. These represent a large percentage of available texts, ample in volume to offer a wide range of suitable books from which to select, and it is to these that we should go rather than to the foreign classics and standard works which, in the ordinary way, are most likely to be or have been translated and thus made available to English readers.

The grounds for this contention are several. Firstly, the range of the stock is extended into fields which would not otherwise come within the scope of the library. Obviously, other things being equal, the library which offers 50 translations and 50 other untranslated works in the original is giving more information and thought to the public than one which includes the texts *and* translations of 50, or even 90, books.

Secondly, when he can obtain a good translation, the English reader can acquaint himself much more readily with this work, and would probably prefer to devote the time allotted to the reading of foreign texts to those works which otherwise he could not know. Thirdly, since the foreigner would be an English resident, it is to be presumed that he would have sufficient knowledge of English to enable him, also, to make use of the translation.

In short, therefore, foreign texts should be limited, in the average small library (the very big library will, with a much larger stock, rightly include a number of standard texts), to books of informative value for which there are no English equivalents (provided always that there is the usual degree of demand for the information and a sufficient number of readers able to make use of it), and untranslated or untranslatable works. The chief examples of the last named are poetry, and, to a less extent, pure literature in other forms such as the essay. These should be given preference.

BOOKS FOR SPECIALISTS, PROFESSIONAL MEN, ETC.

Should the public library provide works for specialists and professional men, such as doctors, lawyers, etc.? Much discussion has been at various times provoked by this question, which is one, however, readily answered in the light of the principles of book selection. Like many other debatable issues, it cannot be solved without a general understanding of these principles, and hence the tendency has been to dogmatise either one way or the other.

The generally accepted opinion is that quoted in the "A.L.A. Manual of Library Economy" (Chapter

XVI, Book Selection, by Eva L. Bascom ¹)—"The public library is not to supply the specialist with his regular tools, but only with the general literature of his subject." Now this is perfectly sound if only we accept the literal statement without unduly expanding its meaning. If by "his regular tools" we mean those standard reference works which all professional men should possess, the argument must hold good—though, as a matter of fact, there may often be a demand for these works by the general public (e g. the "British Pharmaceutical Codex" is clearly a desirable possession for any good reference library). If we say, however, as often we have heard it said, that the public library should not purchase technical works on medicine and law, and such subjects, we are making an unwarrantable assertion. Whether we should or should not provide these works, and to what extent, depends upon several considerations.

In the first place the extent of such purchases is governed, like everything else, by the principles of value and volume of demand, by applying which we will guard against any unfair predominance of such works.

Secondly, on the same page of the "A.L.A. Manual" we find a recommendation that will influence our decisions in this matter. It is this—"Select some books to meet the needs of only a few persons, if by so doing society at large will be benefited." This is really only another way of stating part of our value and volume of demand principles, since a subject by which "society at large will be benefited" is clearly

¹ This is quite an excellent little summary, sound enough so far as it goes—though on some points the present writer disagrees with its recommendations.

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one of high value. Therefore, since the provision of specialised works on, say, medicine will obviously benefit not the few doctors who read them but the general public, who are all potential patients, the significance of this statement need not be emphasised further.

Thirdly, though many librarians refuse to buy books for professional men, few, if any, object to purchasing technical works on industrial subjects, though these will be used by a few. This latter provision is defended (rightly) on the grounds that the whole community benefits indirectly and directly by the prosperity of local industries. It should not be forgotten that this is just as powerful an argument in favour of legal or medical collections.

Fourthly, it is often stated that the funds of a small library are not sufficient to support adequate specialists' collections—that the few law treatises and medical monographs which they can purchase must necessarily be incomplete and inadequate. That is no argument—half a loaf, even a slice, is better than no bread.

Fifthly, we are sometimes told that these people should purchase their own books—again a poor argument, which the librarian should never use. He may say that, in view of his limited income, he is unable to buy them and would not be justified in doing so, but he should always express his willingness to buy any works were it possible for him to do so. There must never be any non-privileged class in a library, in principle, anyhow, though in practice he naturally helps first those classes which are unable to help themselves.

In short, this is but an example of the way in which a knowledge of general principles will help us to deal

fairly with all the demands which may be made upon the library.

TEXT BOOKS AND SCHOOL BOOKS.

The question whether these should be provided by the public library involves not book selection principles, but practical administrative considerations. In theory there is no reason why we should not provide them, or hymn books for that matter. In practice other agencies are maintained by the public to render this service, and therefore we are released from our obligation to perform it. We need not be ready to usurp the functions of other bodies when we are so hard put to do our own work.

This does not mean that the library must never provide text books. Far from it. Whenever there is no other agency in the town which should provide them we must treat the demand in the ordinary way. For instance, should there be no instruction in hydraulics in the local technical school, though there existed many students, we should provide books as on any other subject. We might, of course, urge the need for such classes to be provided at the school—but that is another matter. The text books of the *unattached* student can seldom be obtained saving through the library, and, though we may lament the extra burden thrown upon our shoulders through the inadequacy of educational institutions, the student should not suffer thereby.

BOOKS FOR WOMEN.

These are referred to specially, not because they require any special treatment, but because it is questionable whether, apart from recreational sections, the

average library does as much for women as possible. It is granted that the non-recreational demands of women cannot be as large as those of men—for one thing the range of their activities is more limited. This fact should, however, urge us to pay more attention to those matters which *are* of interest to women. This is justified on the score of assessment of unexpressed demand alone, which would call for many more books on the domestic arts (to give one example only) than are usually provided. In most other matters the needs of women call for a different type of book and the supply of such books is not yet an adequate one. In spite of all the mere male may imagine, the average woman has not as much time as the average man for general reading, and so she prefers the concise, interesting book by reading which she can combine recreation with creational studies.

Further, until quite recently her opportunities for education have been less, and fundamentally her intellectual endowment is of a lower order (of course she has amply compensating qualities!), and so she often requires a simpler, more elementary book. The present generation of women have to make up a lot of lost ground.

And, most important of all, her standpoint is different. She judges—and is right to do so—from a different angle, by other arguments, with complementary but essentially feminine ideals. Her predilections lead her into paths other than those trodden by men. Therefore—and let us not forget that we men are in a minority—if we would serve the whole of our public we must appreciate the special requirements of women as well as of men.

LOCAL COLLECTIONS.

A "local collection" may be defined as a collection of all books and other library material dealing directly (or, to any reasonably important extent, indirectly) with a locality, its history, topography, human conditions (i.e., economic, religious, social, etc.) and the lives of its inhabitants, collectively or individually, also works printed or published in the locality when either they serve to illustrate the progress of printing in the locality or they are primarily of local significance (not necessarily of local interest), also the writings of local authors when either they are primarily of local significance or when they are of such a nature that they would not be provided except for the circumstance of their local authorship.

This definition would, it is believed, meet with general acceptance, and that such a collection should be gathered together by all public libraries is commonly believed. With this the author is in entire agreement.

Now at first sight the advocacy of a local collection would appear to run counter to the principles of demand since, we must confess, every local collection so constituted will include a considerable amount of material for which there is not, and never has been or will be, sufficient demand to justify its inclusion on a basis of our principles. For much more the value of the demand would be very low.

Nevertheless, without sacrificing our theoretical considerations, we may advocate local collections. In the first place there *will* be genuine and important demand for a *large* part of the material, which would undoubtedly call for provision in the ordinary way. It is with the remainder of the material that we are concerned, and we find our justification in a seeming

paradox. The demand for the first-mentioned portion will be largely local in origin; the demand for the latter will be universal—universal in *extent*, even though extremely small in volume. We collect these books *not* in response to local needs, as we do all other sections of the library, but in response to demands, actual and possible, from the whole of the world. In this case of minor local literature—here is the paradox, if it is such—we make an exception to our general rule of considering only our own public, and make provision instead for people for whom only in this matter will we cater. The reason is this—for all matters of local significance the obvious centre of attraction is the locality. Any one requiring material of this nature, no matter where he resided, would seek for it *first* in the locality concerned. Therefore there will exist a demand, which cannot be estimated at all and so must be presumed to be important,¹ from outside the locality as well as from within. As a similar demand for information on other localities may well exist among our own inhabitants, we must be prepared to reciprocate by establishing a complete local collection in our own. An example may be desirable:—Mr. Smith of A town wishes to read a sermon which a half cousin of his grandfather delivered while he was Rector of St. Barnabas' Church at B town, which sermon was printed locally. He is right in presuming that if a copy is preserved anywhere it will be found in B town library. We cannot estimate how many such Mr. Smiths there may be, and the only way to obviate the total disappearance or, at any rate, the burial in some

¹ In this instance only, of course. We are certainly not laying down the general rule that the inestimable is necessarily important. To do so would be very dangerous.

unsuspected library, of the sermon required is to preserve it in the *local* collection. Needless to say, we do not neglect purely local interest in the said sermon, which is bound to be greater than, probably, all other interest together. This argument is simply intended to strengthen our case for the preservation of local material when we are doubtful whether local demand is sufficient justification.

IX

MISCELLANEOUS TOPICS

DISPOSITION OF STOCK

WHEN selecting stock the demands of an area will be considered as a whole, but whenever the library works through the agency of more than one department—as is the case in all but the very smallest institutions—it is necessary to consider the disposition of stock among the various departments and libraries so that it may best reach the public. In the past there has been a tendency to allocate books to branches, and to lending or reference departments, without much thought and with a proportionate loss of service.

(a) *Branches.* As a preliminary to this question, it must be urged that the whole provision of the library system must be related. The branches must not be regarded as independent libraries, but, essentially, as complementary to one another and to the central library. The practice of restricting residents in a district to their branch which, though we may find it difficult to credit, is to be found in some towns is a most vicious one. Tickets should be available at all and any libraries; it should be possible for borrowers to return books taken from one branch to any library in the system; a complete “union” catalogue of the entire system is not an ideal but a necessity for full service; and a prompt method of delivering books to the branches at which they are required from those

where they are available should be in operation. Then the library system can be considered as one library for selection purposes, and, needless to say, the work of selection for the whole system must be centralised.¹ Only if the stock of each library is equally available to every resident in the town can the demands of the population be considered as a whole, and no other method is practicable. Not only would the division of the district into areas be a most wasteful operation; it would lead to waste of time, duplication of work, and the inevitable neglect of less important interests which in any one area might not merit representation but which in the aggregate would demand consideration.

At the same time branch areas must be considered independently in two respects. Firstly, though the entire resources of the largest system may *in theory* be made available to every one, *in practice* the degree of availability differs enormously. The books which are actually on the shelves and in the stock of a branch must be infinitely more accessible to the local borrower than the book which (a) must be sought elsewhere, or (b) for the delivery of which he must wait, even for a few hours, or (c) which is only represented at his branch by a catalogue entry—which he cannot see and examine, may not know about, and may not have the initiative to enquire for. Several questions arise from this. In the first place—perhaps this is more a question of administration than of book selection—we would be well advised to avoid the indiscriminate provision of small branch libraries. It is not enough for us to say that the effective area of a library is only

¹ The central selector should, of course, be in close touch with branch requirements, and regular reports and lists of suggestions should be submitted by the branch librarians,

so much—a $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles radius is sometimes given as a rule, though how it is possible to dogmatise on a matter depending so much upon the local conditions it is hard to see. We must also realise that the effectiveness of a branch is perhaps 95 per cent. the effectiveness of the actual branch stock and 5 per cent. that of the whole of the rest of the system (so far as lending issues are concerned). The smaller that stock the less must be its range and value. Therefore, to put the matter into figures, suppose that two areas of a library could, with a branch in each, attract 10,000 readers. A centrally arranged library for these two areas would be effective only for, say, 15,000 of them, but could have twice as good a stock. What is the best provision in such a case? On the one hand it is not desirable to lose 5,000 readers; on the other hand a better service, and a bigger stock, would be offered to 15,000. Would not the best course be, never forgetting that local conditions are the determining element, to provide the one larger branch and make adequate provision for the 15,000 and provide, in a less satisfactory way certainly, for the remaining 5,000 by very small branches or delivery stations closely in touch with the branch and, through it, with the rest of the system. Like every other question in librarianship and book selection, this is a matter of proportion. We cannot offer an ideal service to anyone, and so the relative merits and demerits of alternatives must be given full consideration.

Secondly, the local requirements of branch areas must be considered. One example will expound this sufficiently. There are works engaged in the manufacture of Diesel engines in the town, and as a result a demand for books on this subject. The works are

situate in a branch area, and consequently 99 per cent. of the users of these books will either reside in or visit daily that branch area. These books should clearly be housed in the local branch, and it *may* not be necessary even to represent the subject at the central library. The old idea that the central library should contain the best and newest and the majority of books on all required subjects will not lead to satisfactory results. The central library is simply a branch serving a larger population, and consequently carrying a larger stock, *plus* a central depository for all the lesser subjects which cannot be represented at each branch, but which may be required at any. When books on these lesser subjects are needed more in a special branch area than anywhere else they should be housed where they will be most effective.

Thirdly, so far as general subjects are concerned the tastes and requirements will vary according to the prevailing local social conditions, class predomination, educational standards, and so on. It is useless to provide a slum area with the reading suitable for a residential suburb. Local needs must be considered. In short, the question of branches involves a system of book selection within a system. First of all the whole area will be studied, as is shown in a previous chapter; then it will be decided how far this total provision must be decentralised; finally to carry out this decentralisation each area will be studied as a separate unit. Clearly the librarian cannot *begin* by considering branch areas—for one thing he must consider the central library from which all the branch area residents will draw, for another he must make provisions justified by the whole area but too slight to be dissipated. He must select his stock for the area as a whole and then

study branch requirements as a guide, not to provision (he has already made that), but to disposition. Perhaps an example will make this clearer. A town with several branches has one in a good intellectual district, whose residents require *à la carte* works on the fine arts, one branch of which is the collection of pottery. Now in each of the other branch areas there are a few people interested in pottery—but only a few. If he assessed demand by branch areas the librarian might be compelled to dismiss this demand as too slight in all but the first-mentioned branch. Assessing his area as a whole, considering these few people together, however, the demand ceases to be negligible and adequate provision is required. So far as the other branch readers are concerned the central library must serve, but the branch library in the intellectual neighbourhood should also (alone among the branches) have some additional provision of books on this subject.

(b) *Reference Libraries* There is much vagueness current as to the composition of the reference library. Reference collections vary, according to the interpretation put upon the phrase, from miniature British Museums to a few shelves of annuals and an encyclopædia or two. Their ideal constitution may, however, be better defined.

Reference collections should include three classes of books :

- (1) Strictly reference works
- (2) Standard works of information.
- (3) All such books as cannot be lent for home reading.

These call for further definition.

(1) and (2) are intended to fulfil the genuine function of a reference library—the supply of *information*. If

one were asked to distinguish, in one phrase, between lending and reference libraries, one could not do so better than by saying that "reference libraries supply information; lending libraries supply books." This is not a paradox, or an attempt to be funny at the expense of popular literature, but a genuine distinction. Ninety per cent. of visitors to a reference library come for definite information—they do not in the least know or care which book will provide that information; it is not a book they require, but a fact. On the other hand, the borrower requires not a fact, but a book on a subject or of a particular kind. Admittedly he wants the book because from it he can obtain information, but the material with which he is concerned is the book itself. The reference library reader is *not*, let it be repeated, concerned with books. He may ask for books; he may himself seek for his fact in the pages of books. The point is that he would be most advantageously served if he asked the reference assistant for information, the assistant either telling him (after reference to the book) what he wishes to know, or giving him the answering book, indicating, even, the page and paragraph. Incidentally, it might be urged that this latter method should be encouraged, since a trained reference librarian (and there should always be a trained reference librarian) knows better than 90 per cent. of enquirers where the information is to be found. The reader who asks for books is, ipso facto, limiting the value of the library to his own knowledge of its resources. Such a reader requiring, say, a chemical formula, might ask for the one book he knew from among the many he didn't know. This book might not include the formula he required. If he asked instead for the formula, the assistant would be

able to utilise the whole resources of the library in his search for it.

To return to the original topic, however, the primary function of the reference library is the provision of information *on the spot*. Therefore the stock of a reference library can be built up according to a very definite plan. It should commence with those books which give most of the most frequently required information. An encyclopædia is an example of such books. The only questions we can ask of a proposed addition to a reference collection are (*a*) how much information does it give and (*b*) is the information that which is most required. The second is the more important question. In a sense every book gives information on something¹ but is it the information most needed? The smaller the library the greater the average general appeal of the information: the larger, the less general will it become. All the time, however, information provision is the aim and end of the collection.

Now it is necessary to realise that information-giving books are not necessarily those which are described as quick reference works. There are some books which no one would dream of reading—books to which one would only refer for specific facts. These are naturally placed in the reference library. But it is often forgotten that the bulk of information is to be found only in books which could and are generally intended to be read consecutively. Because a book can and will be read one must not necessarily place it in the lending library. In fact, to do so will destroy the worth of the reference collection. By all means let us duplicate

¹ At the moment we are assuming that the information in all cases is reliable.

such works, but let us not omit to include them in the reference department. Every librarian will know the kind of book to which we refer—"systematic" books and comprehensive treatises on all matters, standard histories, and the like. No reference collection would be complete without such a work as the "Cambridge History of English Literature"; on the other hand there are so many who would borrow it for systematic study at their homes that it should equally be available for loan. All such works will not be so obviously of reference value, however, and so it is difficult to draw a distinguishing line. Let us consider two ideals: The ideal and largest reference collection would comprise sufficient books to *answer any question* which a reader might ask; the ideal lending library would contain every book which any borrower was likely to wish to read in his home. In cases of doubt these two principles must be considered jointly. Which is the greater likelihood—that someone will ask for the information? or that someone will want to borrow the book? Secondly, which is going to be the better service? If the total value of the use made of a book by enquirers is greater than the value of its use for loan purposes it must (unless duplicated for both departments) be placed in the reference collection, and vice versa.

The librarian must in practice balance the merits of these two ideals. On the one hand he must remember that there are distinct advantages to be gained from home reading. On the other hand he must not allow off the premises books which are likely to be required frequently and to good purpose in the reference department. In fact it will be found that the best service will be given (when the structural arrangement of the

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two departments permits) by the closest co-ordination of lending and reference collections. Every book which is at the time on the lending shelves should be available in the reference department, and to further this a union catalogue of lending and reference stocks should be provided in the latter department. Also this is a strong argument in favour of adopting the same system of classification throughout the library. To a less extent—for the abuse of this practice is dangerous—there should be no rigid law against the borrowing of certain reference books. The indiscriminate loan of reference stock is most undesirable, but it should be made possible for genuine requests from borrowers to be considered on their real merits. The discretion in this matter should be retained by a really responsible official who will consider whether better service would be rendered by granting the loan or by retaining the book for possible reference readers, and also whether there is any real reason why the would-be borrower should not read the book on the premises.

A second and very important function of the reference library is that it provides a room in which people may study. Their reading might be of exactly the same character as that pursued by others in their own homes; either because they have no suitable home surroundings, or because they prefer the reference library atmosphere, or because they require more books than they could borrow, these people choose to read in the building rather than at their homes. In this case the department becomes less a purely "reference" library and more a "reading or study room." This practice is worth encouraging, yet it is clearly impossible to provide special stock for the benefit of such readers since its range will be nearly as wide as that of the

ordinary borrower. The only way to meet their demands is the before suggested availability of lending stock plus the provision of such standard works as have reference value as well. For instance, the most important literary works should always be found on the premises not only for the reader but for the enquirer for information.

The third class of works—those which cannot be ordinarily lent for home reading—calls for little comment. It includes :

(a) Expensive books—though the factor of cost should not be an invariable index. Too often the thoughtless librarian puts into the reference library every volume costing more than a certain figure, and thereby wastes his money. At the same time he cannot neglect the inevitable wear and tear to which every book on the open lending shelves is subjected apart from “issue” wear. Many expensive books which are yet strictly suitable for loan are advantageously “housed” in the reference collection to save this wear and tear, and such books should be loaned readily to suitable borrowers. There will still be books too expensive to be loaned at all and—well, these should be added with great care, since if they lack reference value they cannot be used at all.

(b) Non-portable books

(c) Irreplaceable books, and

(d) Books which are unsuitable for unrestricted circulation on, for example, moral grounds.

In conclusion it might be remarked that in all but a few large towns the functions of a reference library do not call for a very large stock. The number of works which could not better be circulated for home reading is not so large as some imagine, and so the

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tendency is often to lose a large part of the total possible value of a stock by placing too large a portion of it in the reference library

THE FUNCTION OF A NATIONAL CENTRAL LIBRARY.

This question is related to the foregoing sections. It is becoming more and more fully recognised that users of the local public library must have access to the whole body of literature and not only to that very small portion which can be, and need be, provided locally. Libraries are serving *individuals* always and it would be foolish to imagine that the *individual* needs of a small community are any less wide in their range than those of the residents in a large crowded centre. The only difference between the small community and the large (and here we are speaking of the student and more serious reader) is that in the latter the combination of individuals requiring the same books more frequently makes their provision possible. We have merely to recall our basic principles of the volume and value of demand and we perceive that the smaller the area the larger the number of needs which are (in that area) too small to justify provision. In other words, the smaller the area the fewer people can we serve adequately. We have, accordingly, to alter our viewpoint and consider not the aggregate of demand in one area but that in the whole country. The one demand here, the one there, over all England together will prove sufficient excuse for the provision of most published books. The function of a central library is to answer those demands which are insufficient to call for local provision—that and nothing else.

The only consideration which can influence a local library when making demands upon the central

library must be this—that local demand is insufficient. It is not enough to lay down a rule that the central library shall only supply books costing more than a certain sum. On the one hand there might be sufficient local demand for the most expensive work to make its local purchase essential; on the other hand the local call for inexpensive books might be very small, yet if the small library must keep on purchasing such books in time it will *waste* a considerable sum of money.

Needless to say the demand which is too small in one area will be permissible in another and so the central library must adjust its provision to the needs of the smallest areas and be willing to provide, to the small libraries, everything excepting those works for which there should be a justifiable demand from the smallest library. It should also have no hesitation in informing the local library which makes unreasonable calls upon it. Therein lies the only real danger of the Central Library idea. Mr. L. P. Jacks divides mankind into two classes—those who consider it their duty to mind other folks' business and those who feel that they ought to leave their own business to the care of the first class. Many library authorities belong to the latter variety. They will be only too ready to borrow from the central library books which they ought to provide for themselves—and for this the public will suffer. For one thing they will be kept waiting; for another, money which might go to the purchase of stock will be wasted on postage.

If, however, both the local librarian and the official at the central library—chiefly the former since he alone is in a position to assess local demands—will keep in mind the principles of book selection, the

respective provinces of the local and the national libraries will be fairly well marked out

Apropos the central library—though not related to book selection theory—it has been suggested that the central library should issue a catalogue! Nothing could be more unnecessary or more impossible. Since the central library may be called upon to supply anything but the universally essential 1 per cent of printed matter the catalogue of the central library can only be the English catalogue plus the American catalogue and every other list. Its stock obviously would not be so limitless, but it should have the power to make it so in practice by obtaining on demand *any* book which may be required. The central library which could only supply *limited* services would prove most inadequate. We are not making unreasonable demands. If the central library is to do its work properly, if it is to *supply every need which cannot be answered locally* (and that is its true function), it must have unlimited purchasing powers.

CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECTS.

It is difficult to define exactly the characteristics of a controversial subject. Strictly speaking anything and everything can form the basis of controversy. They who first propounded the startling theory that the earth was not flat became engaged in a controversy fraught with very dangerous consequences to themselves. Yet this is not now a controversial subject saving to those harmless lunatics, the "flat earthists." Experience and increased knowledge ever places this and that bone of contention beyond the need for argument, either by exploding it or by proving its unassailable truth.

However, as we all recognise a "controversial subject" when we encounter it, definition is unnecessary. For our purposes it is a subject which is the basis, not of a literature of universally admitted fact, but either of advocacy or of condemnation, or, most often, of both. The outstanding examples of such subjects are religion and politics. Advocacy, propaganda, and condemnation are together responsible for a very large percentage of the literature of both of these matters. Each of these has a large non-controversial literature also, but there *are* matters where this is very small, where, in fact, interest in the subject would hardly exist were it not for the element of controversy. Prohibition is such a subject.

So far as we are concerned, the position is this:— (1) We must represent these subjects as though they were non-controversial, but (2) we must be impartial. We cannot value sides, but we must offer the same publicity to each or all parties in the argument. This attitude is the only possible one. The difficulty is this, (3) how shall we regulate the extent of our provision so that our total representation of the subject gives as thorough a survey of its ground as would our representation of an equally important non-controversial subject? It stands to reason that when one half of the literature is devoted to upsetting the propositions of the other half the total amount of ground covered cannot be the same as when the whole is constructive. Five books which seek to prove that meat eating is harmful and five designed to expose the vegetarian diet as a snare and a delusion cannot possibly convey the same amount of information on dieting as ten books of a non-controversial nature.

At first sight it would seem necessary to overcome

this difficulty by doubling the "value number" of these subjects on the ground that even a double representation will leave the provision less satisfactory than it would be in a subject of another character. Yet there is no case for this in actuality. In the first place such augmentation would be at the expense of some other subject. In the second place we must not forget that representation depends upon two factors—the volume of demand as well as its value—and the mere fact that there is controversy involves increased volume of demand. This increased volume will automatically adjust representation, and so our rule in dealing with controversial matters must be this—evaluate the subject as a subject in the ordinary way and then *divide* the representation between the different sides. Always there will be some non-controversial basis and this should be given preference—for example, the non-controversial basis of the vegetarian controversy and the prohibition movement is the work of impartial science. What representation remains must be divided among the contestants.

But how? in what proportion? equally or otherwise?—our difficulties are not over. It is all very well to say "let us be absolutely impartial and provide exactly the same number of books "pro" and "con," but can we do so? and ought we always to do so?

Can we do so?—Not always, sometimes for the very good reason that the books do not exist. For example, every religion is to some considerable extent a controversial subject, as before said. The believer, rightly, devotes his energies to the conversion of the unbeliever and the maintenance of existing belief, yet how few in proportion of the unbelievers seek to attack the religion in question—so far as "literature" is

concerned, at any rate—at all definitely and deliberately. Again, how small relatively is the literature of anti-prohibition. In such cases the librarian simply *cannot* represent equally both sides of the question.

Furthermore, should he try to do so? Let us depart for once from the impartiality we profess and advocate; let us express an opinion. Let us assert that the promotion of temperance is a desirable endeavour and in the interests of society. Shall we, as men working for the good of humanity, go out of our way to be impartial when in our hearts we know that we should *not* be impartial?

However, cannot we save ourselves from any need for this self-assertion? Can we not find a principle which will relieve us of all responsibility in the matter? It is possible. Let us, to summarise this matter, evaluate controversial subjects as though they were in no way different from other matters, let us give preference to the non-controversial basis and then devote such part of the representation as remains to controversial works provided *in proportion to the volume of demand for the different sides of the controversy*

DURATION OF INTEREST.

There is, again, the thorny problem of the permanence or transience of interest, a question which, expressed in plain terms, is this—to what extent should the library supply books of purely temporary interest? In the past the general consensus of opinion has been too heavily weighted against such provision, a decision based perhaps upon neglect of two considerations. Firstly, it is said that to cater for the passing need is to fill one's shelves with useless lumber in the future, *but*, if the use made at the time has been suffi-

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cient to justify the expense does that really matter? We can always withdraw them when they have ceased to be of value. If we regard every purchase as an investment the interest upon which is its value to the community we are able better to evaluate our purchases. On this basis the interest on a work used twice a year for twenty years would not (presuming the value of each issue to be the same) exceed the interest on a book of temporary value used forty times in one year and then burnt or neglected. Secondly, to what extent are *any* books of lasting interest. For one thing the *subject* may be of permanent importance, but will the individual book remain as valuable and complete an exposition of it? It will be found that with the exception of works of literary and artistic value very few books maintain their importance for many years. There is a constant decrease in capital with such works—with *all* but a very small proportion, in fact. Most poetry, music and painting, even, depreciates as a subject of demand *in time*—and the arts are the most permanent of all human productions. This fact should be kept in mind and will favour the practice of meeting temporary needs—though, needless to say, there is a limit to which this principle should be applied—and that limit is the danger of omitting the few works which *will* prove of permanent value.

THE LIBRARY AS BOOK COLLECTOR.

In one sense of the words every librarian is a book collector in that he collects or gathers together books for the use of the public, but we are *not* using the words in that sense. If we did so apply the term we could with equal logic describe most business men and many others as coin collectors, whereas that name is

reserved for those who collect coins not for their intrinsic value as tokens representing wealth but for some extrinsic unessential characteristic—their rarity, historical position, (very rarely), artistic merit, etc.

Books also can be collected for these two reasons—i.e. their intrinsic or extrinsic values. The intrinsic value of a book, or in other words its purpose, depends upon the information, thought, or imagination put into print for the reader's benefit. Certain physical matters—e.g. the size of the print, quality of the illustrations, etc.—can add to or detract from its intrinsic value, but the printed *matter* is the essential feature and of prime importance. The extrinsic values, which appeal to the collector, on the other hand need not, and seldom do, bear any relation to the value of the matter or the purpose of the works concerned. With first editions, copies with misprints, impressions on large paper, numbered and signed copies, copies bound in snake's skin or human skin, early printed books, etc., the factor which makes this extrinsic appeal is quite apart and different from the real or intrinsic value of the book (speaking generally). As a presentation of this intrinsic value the Eversley edition of Shakespeare is infinitely preferable to the first folio, but the one is valued at a few shillings and the other at thousands of pounds. The book collector buys according to a basis of value quite different from that of the book user.

Now we are in no way criticising the private book collector. He is in no way worse than any of the other collectors of things which are not necessarily either of utility or artistic or intellectual value. With the psychology of the collector we are not concerned, though there can be no doubt that collecting is an

excellent recreation of very wide appeal. There are also by no means negligible "by-products" of the collector's activity; for example, many works are to-day published in editions, designed for the collector and only made possible by the certainty of his demands, which will be welcomed by the genuine book user as well. At the same time we must not overestimate the value of this recreation—and there is a growing tendency to do so.

As librarians our attitude towards the general subject is governed by obvious principles. Many forms of collecting are accompanied by or complementary to other interests. For example, the collecting of fossils is a part of the study of geology, and the collecting of china of either the study of the manufacture of pottery or of plastic art. In so far, however, as this other interest is absent we have no alternative but to judge the pursuit purely as a recreation and of no other significance.

We do not propose to deal here with our attitude towards collecting, however, but with the possibility of our becoming, ourselves, collectors. And the obvious thing for us to collect is books. Let us state our attitude at once and then justify it—the library should *not* purchase any book because of any value other than its intrinsic worth or for any reason saving that of meeting the demands of the public.

A certain number of early printed books, etc., may be acquired as museum specimens illustrating the history of the book arts, and a few examples of artistic book production and of attempts to show how the utility of the book may be improved by better attention to physical factors are also desirable, both as an encouragement to workers in this field and as a means

of rousing public interest. Otherwise we can heed only one consideration—the value of the book as a book, as the presentation of facts, thoughts and opinions.

The purchase of first editions and all other kinds of bibliographical rarities and curiosa is objectionable on three grounds.

Firstly, these things appeal only to a very small percentage of the general public and only to a small extent to them, since the basis of collecting is acquisitiveness. Therefore the very few “book collectors” in a town will find little satisfaction in the communal ownership of these “treasures.”

Secondly, their purchase cannot be justified by the principles of the value or volume of demand. Few of the public have any need or desire for them.

Thirdly, such provision is absolutely unproductive. It neither stimulates any interest other than the unproductive and sterile ones of the collector, nor does it help forward the growth of knowledge or make the publication of knowledge any easier, whereas every book of intrinsic interest which is bought paves the way for the publication of some other, with consequent advantage to publisher, author and reader.

When we consider, moreover, that a great deal of collecting is actuated by the hope that acquisitions will increase in monetary value we have a strong case against this injudicious attention to bibliographical values. Since the purchases of a library are final and never liable to be sold none of this advantage can accrue to the library.

Not a great proportion of our libraries are addicted to this practice, but some are to an extent which makes it desirable to expose the system.

In concluding these remarks we would mention having heard librarians speak of the value of their stock, meaning thereby the number of rare or expensive items it contained. Such "value" is by no means necessarily anything of which to boast. The only value of a collection is its ability to meet the desire of its public for information, stimulation and recreation.

A library with 100 cheap but useful and used books is very much more valuable than one with an unlimited number of costly but useless and neglected volumes, if we base our judgment upon the only admissible and sensible standard of values.

X

CONCLUSION

WE have now reached the end of this preliminary study in a neglected science. Perhaps "neglected" is hardly the right word to apply, since how many have ever regarded book selection *as* a science? In this our attitude has not been different from that of workers in other subjects. They applied the word "science" only to such fields of research as permitted exact research and experiment; they said "it is impossible to examine, classify and experiment with, say, human behaviour or whatever else it may be, therefore we must not attempt to deal with the subject scientifically, lest we seek to found hypotheses upon unproved data." Now we are realising that we can and need to approach everything scientifically; further, that the inconstancy and unverifiable nature of our phenomena is no excuse for being unscientific; we are even doubtful whether absolute facts and constant relations exist at all, even in the provinces of the most exact sciences.

Much of the present and the best of future psychological, philosophical, ethical and sociological thought will be influenced by this realisation that no matter is so complex, so intangible or so variable that we are not wise to probe in it for whatever measure of truth, order and purpose we may find.

First attempts in a new field are by nature unsatisfactory. Discussion and criticism, though it could not exist without a preliminary statement, will modify, weaken or strengthen many of our initial convictions. And so probably no one has a poorer opinion than the writer of the place this work will take in the future body of literature on book selection. Nevertheless he hopes that one of his main contentions will require no further proof, for it is that book selection is capable of systematic treatment, or being viewed and practised scientifically.

Most of our limitations are, be it remembered, limitations in related sciences, not in our own. The psychologist and the sociologist especially must help; and we can work with them. For instance, the exact place of recreation in human life is primarily a matter for these others; when, if ever, they can give us exact data of any kind we can easily adapt our work accordingly. Again, in a previous chapter we noticed how library use varies with social conditions. We cannot go out into the highways and byways of life and study human conditions at first hand, but others can and are doing. Let us endeavour to grasp the personal significance of their research.

Let us, too, rid ourselves of any idea—if it really exists—that the public library is other than in its infancy. In fact civilisation is but a schoolboy and we are one of its very newest books. We began, as all other innovations began, by adopting the form and methods of the nearest of previously existing agencies. We modelled our public libraries in the mould of the old private, national and collegiate libraries. On the whole it has proved a good mould, though in time we shall most likely need to adapt our administrative, and

certainly our financial, systems to meet new conditions. The one field in which the public library has called for new methods, new perspectives and new ideals is that of book selection. The function of the older classes of library was, as with us, *service*, but whereas there were previously limitations in the number, class and requirements of those to be served, such limitations should not now exist. The library should be as much at the service of every inhabitant as is the water supply.

That is one side of the question. There is another. Everyone uses the water supply, but many, who pay as much as the others, do not use their libraries. "That is their own concern," you say. "If they don't want to wash themselves they can go dirty, so if they choose to remain ignorant, to ignore opportunities for recreation, let them." That is certainly one way of looking at it, but it has its disadvantages. In the first place just as the dirty man who drinks only beer will not trouble about a deficient water supply, so will the non-library user act as a deterrent to library progress. It may be asked why we should *expect* the non-user to assist library progress from which he does not intend to benefit. Unfortunately we cannot rest satisfied with that query; unfortunately we cannot ignore the non-user. There are many implications in that remark which we cannot discuss. Neither, in a book on book selection can we deal with methods for decreasing the number of non-users. In one way, however, the non-user *does* concern book selection. It is this. Our financial means will always be in direct relation to the number of users, since it is they who will advocate the maintenance and extension of our work. As our means are limited, so are we restricted in our provisions for those who *do* use the library. Increased

use, be it remembered, leads not only to a better service, but to economy, since the book which is provided for the few may well serve the many, with no extra expenditure on books and a very disproportionate increase in administrative costs. Finally, yet another aspect is that, as a result of this last factor, the greater the increased use and increased income, the larger becomes the percentage of our means available for book provision.

Good book selection will help to increase the use made of the library. Above all, the conception of our work as the rendering of definite service closely related to demand will remove many misconceptions and prejudices and bring about a closer, more friendly, more fruitful relationship between the institution and its public.

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